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IDS.—No. II.

GOLD,

FIC LEGEND

GHT CANTOS.

BY

ALDWIN FOSBROKE.

There on a day a noble youthly knight
Seeking adventures in the salvage wood,
Did by great fortune get of her the sight,
As she sate careless by a christall flood."

SPENSER. "*Faery Queene*." Bk. IV. Cant. II.

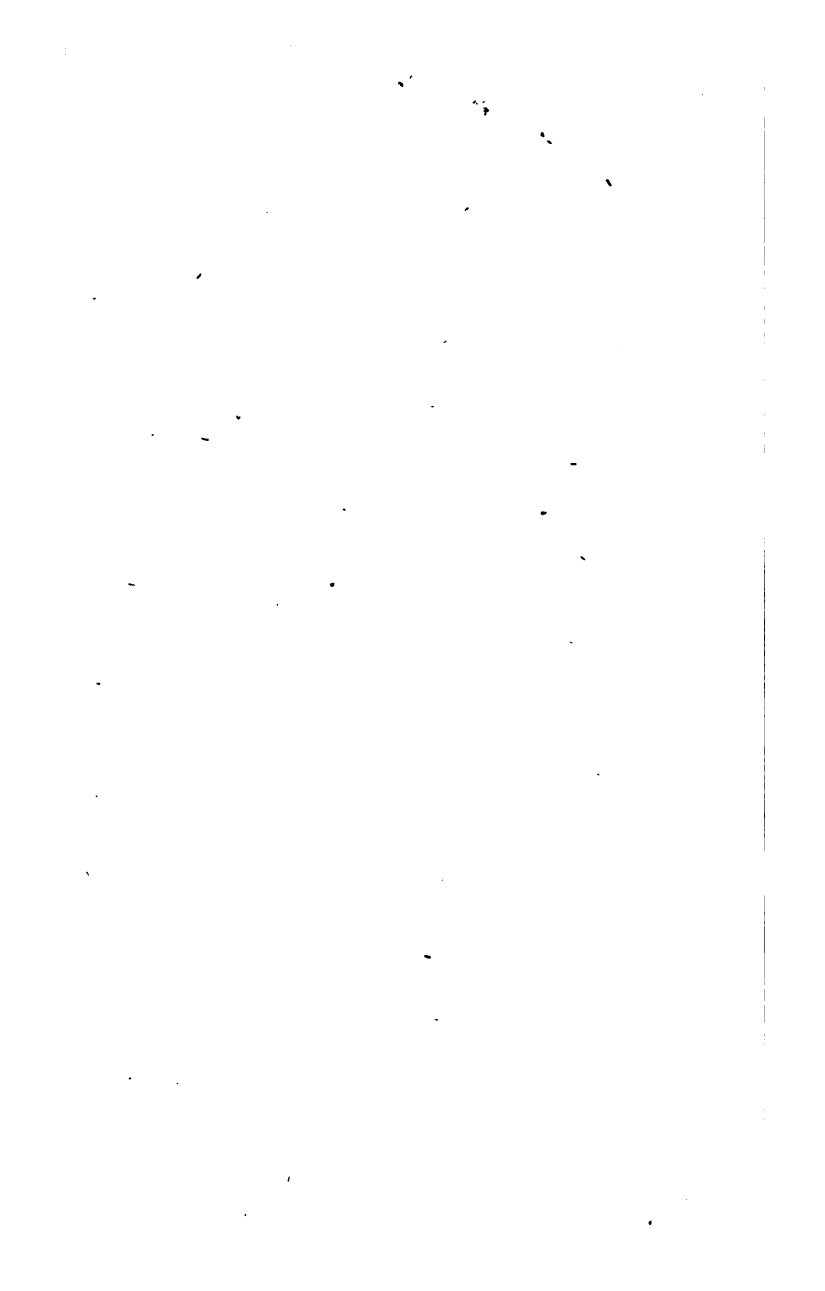
London:

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COVENT GARDEN.

1872.

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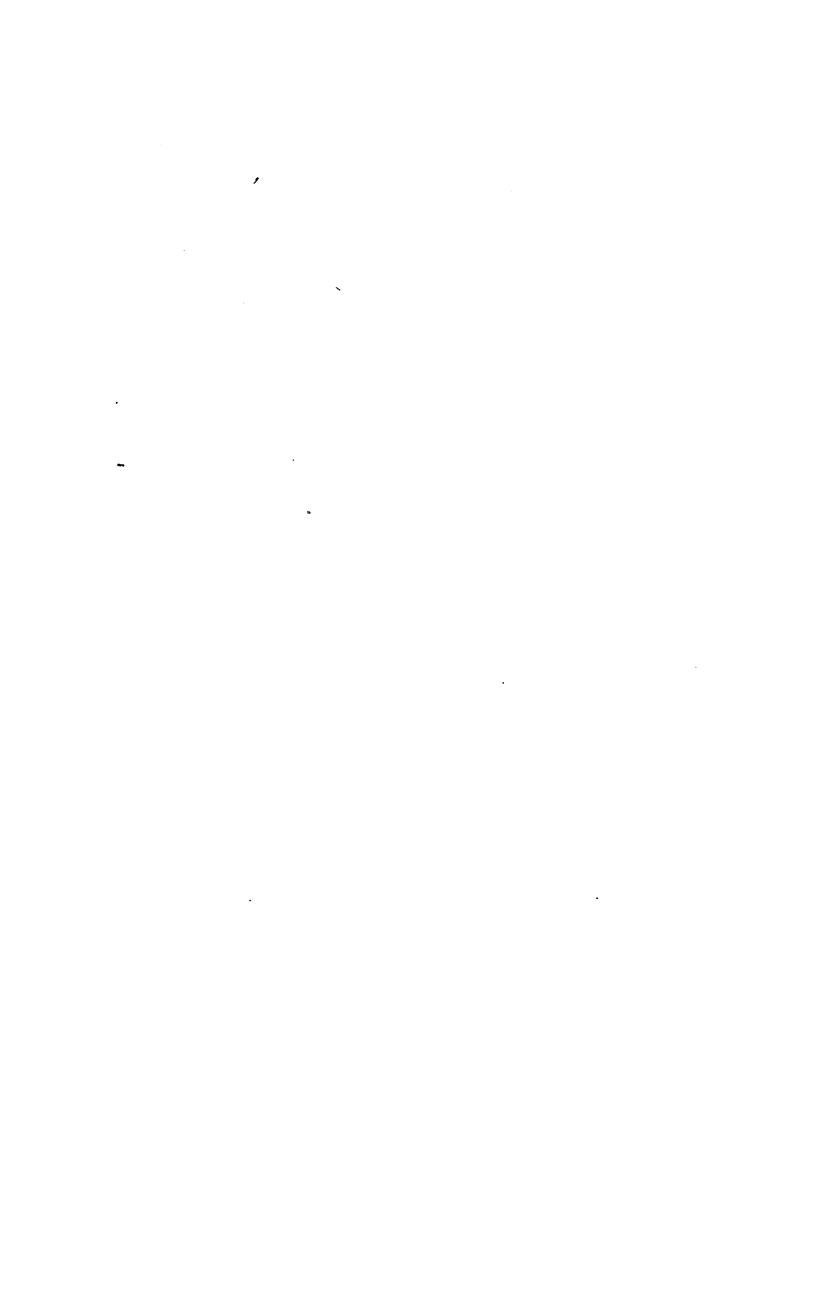


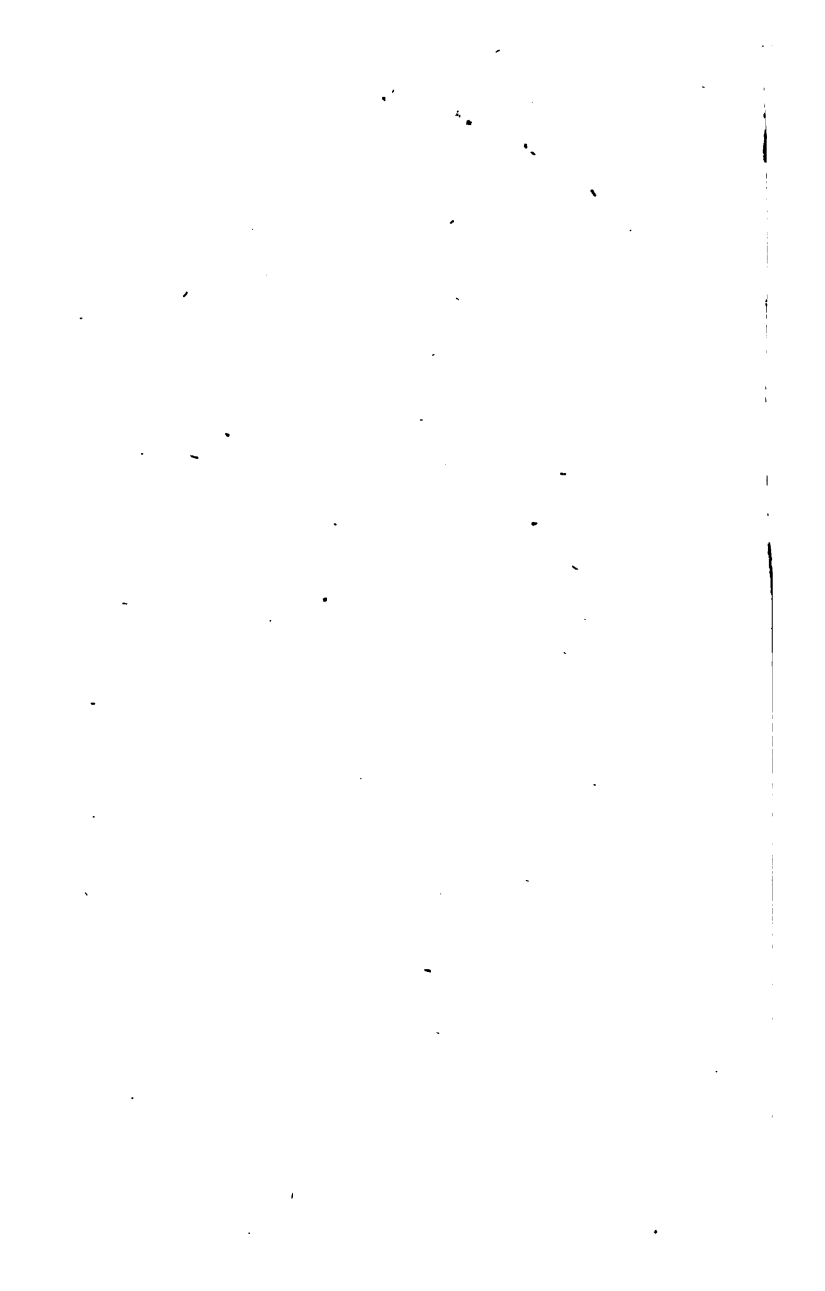
RHEINGOLD.



600093036R







RHEINGOLD.

METRICAL LEGENDS.—No. II.

R H E I N G O L D,

A ROMANTIC LEGEND

IN EIGHT CANTOS.

BY

JOHN BALDWIN FOSBROKE.

"There on a day a noble youthly knight
Seeking adventures in the salvage wood,
Did by great fortune get of her the sight,
As she sate carelesse by a christall flood."

SPENSER. "*Faery Queene*." Bk. IV. Cant. II.

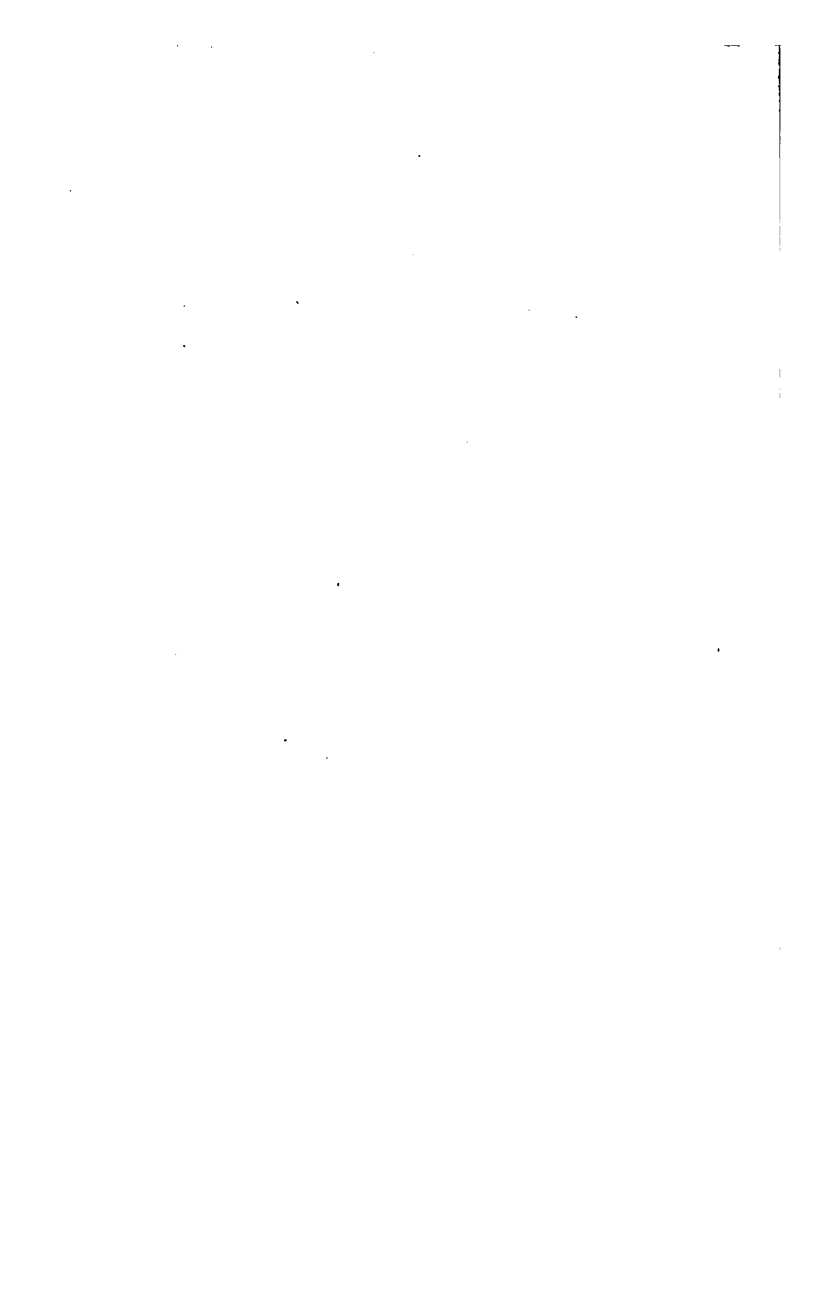
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1872.

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280. n. 428.



PREFACE TO RHEINGOLD.

IT is the belief of the writer of this preface, that every individual of cultivated feelings, lives in some strain of thought and idea more or less peculiar to himself, (or herself).

I am a musical enthusiast. All the feelings of my life are knit up with the works of Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Weber, Schubert, and all their great brethren ; these form the world of my inward life. Whether or not I am listening to their performance, from this world my inward feelings are *never* absent.

The Legends which I am about to present to the public, are secreted and formed in these feelings, their scenes being perpetually wrought in my imagination whilst listening to such works as the Symphonies of Beethoven. The musical reader will more or less understand me ; the unmusical reader will probably not, but I hope nevertheless that I may interest him with my Legends.

To give the reader some idea of their nature, I would mention three things.

I. The plots are all entirely my own invention, being borrowed from no source of tradition whatever.

II. It is my desire to render the scenes and events picturesque, dramatic, and always sustaining the reader's interest.

III. To render the chief characters always *human* beings with *human* passions.

How far I carry out these desires, I leave the reader to judge.

This and several of my largest Legends will be in verse ; nevertheless I seek attention less as a poet in the general sense, than as a creator of such legendary histories as I have described. I leave it to my readers to determine from these, whether I have any claim to the title "poet."

From the heading of this present legend, "Rheingold," some may imagine it to have connection with the plot of Richard Wagner's opera, bearing the same name. But it has *no* such connection whatever. How it is that it bears the same title, the reader will more easily learn upon perusal than by any explanation that can be here given. The plot of Wagner's opera is one of the national legends connected with *Die Niebelungen*, or mystical treasures of the Rhine. To these there is only a slight allusion in the Prologue of my work, but this allusion is sufficient to cause its title, as the reader will learn on perusal. —That he may understand this, it is necessary he know what *Die Niebelungen* are supposed to be. I therefore here give the origin of that national German tradition.

Siegfrid a Prince, having slain a vast dragon, lay down upon a rock to take repose. Whilst he slept, the blood of the dragon flowed around him, covering the whole of his body, (which it possessed power to render invulnerable,) with the exception of a spot upon his shoulder, on which a leaf fell.

Forthwith Prince Siegfried went through a long course of achievements ; amongst them being the slaughter of a certain dwarf, whom he ravished of vast mystical treasures, known as *Die Niebelungen*.—In the course of events, Siegfried himself being slain by a blow on the unconsecrated spot, these treasures were cast into the Rhine, where they are supposed to lie unto this day. Upon this arch-tradition, numbers of other traditions are founded ; and an allusion (but an allusion only,) is made to it in the opening of this work.

This present Legend is the principal produce of my twenty-first year, and although the first published,

stands second in the intended order of my Metrical Legends. Let the public give but some encouragement, and they shall speedily be presented not only with its predecessor, but with its successors both in prose and verse.

After the Prologue or First Canto, it is in the celebrated Stanza of Spenser, but *not* in the diction of Spenser.

The great problem of why Evil should exist, is the moral subject which I seek in this work (perhaps somewhat fantastically) to illustrate. I do not pretend to throw any new light upon it, but only to suggest some cheering reflection thereon, and uphold the tenets that without Sorrow there could be no real Existence, that without it there would be no depth in our lives.

J. B. F.

April 13th, 1872.

POSTSCRIPTUM.

The Author would remark that long after completing this work, he happened to read the libretto of Weber's early opera "*Sylvana*." Between the *opening* of that opera and the *middle part* of the Second Canto of this Legend, there is a very slight passing resemblance of construction. But the story of that opera is of an utterly opposite nature to that of this work. The resemblance spoken of is merely a passing one of *construction*, not of *plot*, it is a very brief similarity and the total result of chance.

METRICAL LEGENDS.—No. II.

TO HIS FRIEND AND GUARDIAN,

J. B. BUCKSTONE, Esq.

(OF THE THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET),

THIS LEGEND

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



RHEINGOLD.

"There on a day a noble youthly knight
Seeking adventures in the salvage wood,
Did by great fortune get of her the sight,
As she sate careless by a christall flood."

SPENSER. "*Faery Queens*." Bk. IV. Cant. II.

INDEX.

	PAGE
CANTO I.—"The White Fawn of Erichswold"	9
CANTO II.—"The May Wanderers"	22
CANTO III.—"The Hall of Contest"	43
EPISODE.—"Euryanthe"	47
EPISODE.—"Adelheid"	49
CANTO IV.—"Lord Romont's Chase"	63
CANTO V.—"St. Margaret and St. Killian"	90
CANTO VI.—"The League"	108
CANTO VII.—"The Prison by the Sea"	133
CANTO VIII.—"Rothkappchen"	169

PERIOD.—THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

The Scene is first upon the Rhine, afterwards in the Tyrol, lastly upon an imaginary shore of the North Adriatic.

RHEINGOLD.



CANTO I.

PROLOGUE.

THE WHITE FAWN OF ERICHSWOLD.¹

SIR ERICH was the Knight of Erichswold,
His name a beacon upon crest and tower ;
Full oft in eager song by minstrel told,
Full oft the gentle theme of Lady's bower.
Upon its sound the maidens loved to dwell,
The word upon their tapestries enshrined ;
'Twas echoed upon Trumpet, Lute and Bell,
Whilst blazoned banners rolled it to the wind.

But yet this vaunted knight was sorely given
To festals of unholy pleasantry ;—
The monk, by stress of night for shelter driven,
Would shun his hall to seek his peasantry !
—Alas !—all Rhenish wine may teach or dare,
Was freely wrought within his princely lair ;
And oft the spotless dawn its greeting shed
Upon a sunken revel which had led
Its fiery pageant through the paths of night,
Till pale and stricken in the morning-light.

¹ Let the *w* in this word be pronounced *v*, according to German rule.



The Sage declared that years would yet unfold
The doom of Erich of the Erichswold.—

How then thus loved and sung?—'Twere hard to tell,
Save that his Squires and Ladies joined him well.

This knight was German, and the banks of Rhine
Beheld his deeds, his tournaments and his wine.
—But being German on the German Rhine,
No destiny could possibly confine
His life within the boundaries material
Of mortals born in regions less ethereal.

Sir Erich's lands by forests then were bounded,
Where things Unseen and Seen—through old relation,
Appeared to be most startlingly confounded,—
At least, in very strange association.

There Spirits of the Air in form revealed,
Their mystic teachings through the night were telling,
As blackly drave the clouds on flood and field.

Amid the many signs, the visions told
By living scribes,—by chronicles of old ;—
The following was the Legend most renowned,
The arch-tradition of this haunted ground.

Thus ran the mystic record's dark refrain
Along the brooding Minnesinger's strain.

Through ages past,—from time where Story fades,—
Full oft amid those solitary glades,—
Arose before the startled hunter's view,
Alike in glare of noon or vesper-shades,—
A Fawn of most ethereal shape and hue !

But none would ever dare the chase renew,
Or in the hunt that phantom-hind pursue.

Through countless years, where now oblivion reigns,
It roamed the woods, the valleys and the plains ;
Whilst thus the words which ancient seers had spoken,
From out their lore interpreted the token.

—“ So long as unpursued by horse or hound,
The White Fawn lingered in their hunting-ground,—
So long should Time and Destiny uphold

The fortunes of the Lords of Erichswold ;—
 But ever should a scion of their race
 In haughty mood that covenant efface
 And drunken in his pride, destroy the spell,—
 The glory of his fathers should forsake him ;
 —More dark and strange than prophet's tongue may tell,
 A judgment dark and strange should overtake him !”—

The Knight Sir Erich's lady was no more,—
 One only child the destinies had brought her ;
 But every gift of Nature's ready store,—
 Wit, genius, beauty, grace—that infant bore,—
 It was perfection, for it was a daughter.
 Such statement every chronicle confesses.
 —He called her Rheingold, from her shining tresses,
 Which every secret ray of ether blending,
 In long dishevel from her brow descending,
 Appeared as far they lay in golden rest,
 A flow of waters on her rosy breast ;—
 And thus, as every reader will divine,
 Seemed as the folding waters of the Rhine,
 When the glad sun displays his Autumn-pride,
 And passes broadly o'er the living tide ;
 As if the mystic Niebelungen¹ hoard
 Had lept from out its river-shrouded grave,
 Its glittering caverns unto light restored,
 In every hollow of the arching wave !

But many a sage foretold, with word and sign,
 That it should bode no good his child to name
 Thus from those mystic treasures of the Rhine,
 With which no holy thing may consort claim !

He mocked, and pointed to the molten tide
 Which in the Autumn-sun lay redly broken,
 Until there seemed before each Lurley's cave
 A thousand diadems shattered on the wave ;—
 Then pointing to his blushing child, he cried,—
 “No other Name be hers than I have spoken !
 Behold the golden Rhine,—behold my child,—
 Its waves—her locks—as gloriously wild !

¹ See Preface.

—Behold its waters pictured in her tresses,—
 Each ripple softly blown, her Name confesses !
 —No other hence be hers than I have spoken,—
 Fools to their dreams of fiend and Niebelungen.”

Soon as the whims of childish thought were set,
 Arose the Rhenish maid a wild coquette !
 —No lady-mother’s vigilance to mar
 The workings of her sire’s unholy guests,
 In drunken feasts she sate the luring star
 Of thousand princely but unknowingly breasts ;
 Hailed Goddess of the Tournay and the Lute,
 Theme of the Gaugraf’s¹ harp, the Landgrave’s flute,
 Full oft she bade the rabble meet, and long
 Beheld them strive in feats of joust or song ;—
 Arose as if with yielding heart to crown
 Some deeply chosen, long-expected soul,—
 Then casting wide her courtesy’s control,
 Brake in mad laughter or unruly frown.
 —And as she mocked her drunken woers down,
 E’en so she answered Chivalry’s addresses !
 Giving but worship to her golden tresses.—

At length, amid the suitors manifold,
 The Knight Sir Heinrich of the Ruheland,
 —Her cousin, of the house of Erichswold,—
 With various plaints and ditties sought her hand.
 —She wavered,—hearkened,—in so new a style,
 It seemed in truth her courting days were numbered ;
 —No more upon her lips the Bacchant-smile,—
 Upon the bosom of her sighs it slumbered !

On Rhenish waves the Rhenish Elves were met,
 And broadly had the sun of Autumn set ;
 When forth amid the groves of Erichswold,
 Sir Heinrich sought the bower of Rheinègold.
 Beneath the closed casement of the maid,
 He plunges him in drowsy serenade ;

¹ A name given to the robber-nobles, who made war upon the cities of the Rhine, and plundered the peasants.

In many a prelude meditates her name,
 But full an hour no answering sign discovers ;—
 Until—he played a fugue,—and then she came
 To bid him cease !—Bach was not made for lovers.

Shattered the gittern fell from out his clutch,
 Beneath her presence, sovereign voice and touch.
 No longer for inspiring tone he lusted,
 But, song and inspiration hushed together,—
 He turned—if monkish writers may be trusted—
 And—made some few remarks upon the weather.

He felt all speech his burning lips forsake,
 Yet roused his heart to tell his faltering story ;
 And o'er her kindling shoulders as he spake,
 Her wild locks floating, fed the night with glory !

He stood ;—her light hand clasped within his own,
 He feels the hot life laughing in her pulses ;—
 When suddenly a cry—a ringing tone
 Sir Heinrich's heart—Sir Heinrich's brain convulses !
 —“Go !—get thee to thy dreams, Sir Knight !” she cried,
 “Amid thy slumbers be thy ditties told !—
 Go make the stars thy theme,—the moon thy bride !
 He who would claim the heart of Rheinègold,—
 —Hence !—hence !—let him make vintage reign in
 Spring,

—Or let him find an honest Jew, or bring
 A monk whose shrine is not the wassail-bowl ;—
 Produce such trophies, Sirrah, wouldst thou reign ;
 —Without them know thy chiming ditties vain !
 —Hence ! bid another Universe unfold !—
 Forsooth—or slay the Fawn of Erichswold !
 —Farewell,—the Moon give comfort to thy soul.”

Full many a word of omen speaks in jest,—
 In mirth alone the future stands confessed.

Sir Heinrich passed,—Sir Heinrich turned him
 thence,—
 Nor sought to plead with song or eloquence.

What more arose from slighted passion's rage,
 Shall duly burn in record o'er our page.

There rose a day of tourney and of song,
 Once more Sir Erich's halls received the throng.
 From goblets burning deep with Rhenish fire,
 They pledge the day, the maiden, and her sire.

Unhorsed before the couch of Rheinègold,
 The luckless knights who other charms uphold,
 Lie prostrate at the feet of those who claim
 To champion the glories and the name
 Of one who sits unmoved by Prince or Squire,
 Mocking alike their victory or shame.

—The day expires, the even-festals rise
 With shouts and orgie 'neath the Autumn skies.
 With demon-hue the red-burnt torches chase
 The shadows from each revel-wrinkled face.
 With mirth, discussion, repartee and boast
 They urge the night ; each merry rounded toast
 The raised trumps with martial tone record,
 Beating the air with thunders golden-broad !

In pledge and bowl the cry is still they come !
 Through din of clarions in contending bray,
 All-shrouded in its mystery, the drum
 Gives ponderous zest unto the shrill array,—
 —When suddenly an uproar from without,
 With boding sound above the jester's shout,
 Arouses knight and lady, guest and vassal !
 A sudden hush descends on song and wassail.
 —All eyes are turned,—the portal cast asunder,
 Responds unto each lifted gaze of wonder.

Far through the torches and red-burning revel,
 A breathless page, in panic's wild dishevel ;
 With hose bespattered, doublet rent and torn,
 Speeds through the hall as if by demons borne ;—
 Until before Sir Erich's couch he stands,
 Who, raising him with eager, trembling hands,
 Exclaims ;—"Fair boy ! whence art thou ? whence thy
 path ?

—Hast news of tempest, plague, or foeman's wrath ?
 —Not all unknown thy form,—in joust and field
 Have I beheld thee bear thy chieftain's shield :—
 —Thou art"—he cried, his features swiftly scanned,
 "The page of Heinrich of the Ruheland !"

But now the boy, regaining voice and breath,
 Responds ;—" Oh, Sire ! my tidings are of death !—
 Of death—destruction unto all who claim
 The mighty lineage of thy house or name !
 —Through yesternoon, in fierce averted mood
 I marked my chieftain pause and strangely brood ;
 Within his glance a silence darkly cold,—
 Upon his lips the name of Rheinègold !"

As thus he spake, athwart the maiden stole
 A shadow swift and voiceless ; whilst the soul
 Of each who there beheld her, sank, until
 The boy continued ;—" When the Hermit's Hill
 And Albert's-Peak were pointing to the dawn,
 We issued to the glades with hound and horn !

Far through the heather urged my lord the chase,—
 Till as we spurred athwart a desert place,—
 Before us glanced the Fawn of Erichswold !
 —I turned—he seized my rein with savage hold ;—
 " Now quit me, boy," he quoth, " ere more betide,—
 Or—if thou darest, with thy chieftain ride !"

He spake no more, but from my wondering gaze,
 Hulloed and vanished through the morning haze !
 —Fearful of that which should befall my lord,
 I spurred my courser o'er the wooded sward ;—
 Nor dared to think on flight, although mine eyes
 Beheld the Chase accursed and death the prize !—
 —By glen and hollow sped the mystic Fawn,
 By flood and ravine through the Autumn-dawn,—
 Until the Heaven, with averted face,
 Shrank into tempest !—from its hidden base,
 Each mountain rolled its echoes o'er the land ;—
 Smote on their hardened brows the Tempest's brand,
 And of their cloudy garlands ravished them,—
 Trembled, discrowned by Heaven's naked Hand,
 Each monarch in its shattered diadem !
 —Oh darkly fell the tempest as we fled,
 And followed in the thunder's iron tread !
 Till—Mary Hail !—within a rugged glade,
 'Mid tangled knolls and boughs, the phantom strayed,—
 There plunged and paused ;—the tempest seemed to waft
 Around us cries and voices,—but my lord,

Unmoved by storm or phantom, plied his shaft,—
With maddened gesture fixed his quivering cord !

“ Behold the prize—the prize of Rheinègold !”

He cried,—and slew the Fawn of Erichswold !
—What more befell I know not, from my gaze
Both Knight and Fawn had vanished, and in vain
I rode bewildered through the Autumn-haze,—
In terror searched the forest and the plain !”

Now swift confusion bursts upon the hall,
Unstrung the lyre,—unquaffed the goblets fall ;
And Rheingold trembles by her father’s side.

“ Thy news are strange and frenzied, boy !” she cried ;
But now above the outer turrets driven,
With iron tread the thunders pace the heaven !

“ Sir Erich, hear me further,” spake the youth,
“ For I have more of terror and of truth !

—Before the inner court there hath appeared
A Woman, strange in feature and in form ;—
Thrice have the guards, with looks and weapons reared,
Conjured her in the Name of All revered ;—
—She answers not, but gazes on the storm !—
This only hath she uttered, “ Bid your lord
Forth from his hall descend !—I will record
My mission unto him and to his child !”

So strange her accents, and so darkly wild,
None dare respond ;—they hither doubting speed,—
Gaze,—tremble,—and recount Sir Heinrich’s deed !”

Then turned Sir Erich to each wondering guest,
But boding silence reigned within his breast ;—
Whilst fiercely o’er the outer turrets driven,
With iron tread the Thunders paced the heaven.
The eyes of all are cast on Rheinègold,
Who shrinks beside her father, as she hears
Her crime and judgment by the Tempest told,
Loud with the Voices of Forgotten Years !

Sir Erich uttered nought, but grasped her hand ;
Tore from its scone a torch, and bade the youth
Lead onward, whilst the lordly revel-band
In gazing wonder passed to hear the truth
Of that which o’er the stricken jester’s shout,
The Tempest told in mystery without.

Beneath their steps the corridor replies,
 And rocks its stony echoes to their tread.
 —The lowering arch is terror to their eyes,
 And in its stubborn darkness pictures Dread.
 But each invokes the Cross upon his brow,
 As, issuing from out the postern-shade,
 Beneath a wan extending Linden-bough,
 They view the silent figure of a Maid !
 —Savage her garb, yet of a woodland grace ;
 Her staff from off a rugged alder torn,
 Dumb with prophetic majesty her face,
 Though with a silent gaze which seems to mourn ;
 Yet voiceless as her keen uplifted hand,
 Which now arrests the throng with chill command.
 She waves them toward her ; and the groups advance,
 Sir Erich,—Rheingold,—pause within her glance.

A driven cloud athwart the heaven cast,
 Wild as the garment which her shoulder binds,
 Above her passes, streaming on the blast
 E'en as the floating mantle of the winds !
 —Whilst, darkly ruling from the distant height,
 The Storm-fiend stands, the Deity of night.—
 —Shaped in the fiery hollow of his hand,
 The Heavens o'er their living arch expand !—
 And leaping high o'er battlement and tower,
 He stands the dread Creator of the hour !

On Rheingold did the Maiden cast her eye ;—
 Amid the darkness raised her keen white hand,
 As if she would the Thunders deify,
 And worship as she spake !—then through the band
 Of revellers and songster-knights there ran
 A pausing whisper, as her words began.—
 “Thou, Rheingold ! daughter of the Erichswold !
 This night before thee is my task ordained,—
 Thy follies and thy sentence to unfold,
 Before the Tempest's Judgment-seat arraigned !
 —All pregnant with the nature of thy sire,—
 The curse of men,—the stain of minstrel's lyre,—
 Thus far thy years have vanished,—revel-driven !—
 —Through wine and song thy days have held their flight,
 And Folly spread her wing in Heaven's Light,—

Until that light shrank backward, mocked, to
Heaven !

Men's hearts and souls have been thy pageantry,
To hold their hour upon thy ribald stage !
And thou hast lulled in midnight-pleasantry,
The Names which should have pictured Glory's Page !
God's Image was a puppet in thy hands,—
Chief mummary to urge thy revel-bands !
—But whilst the olden covenant remained,
The mystery appointed with thy sires
In ancients days, when, holy and unstained
Their Glory smote upon a thousand lyres ;—
Descending Justice paused, if haply Time
Should curb thee with his teaching, or unfold
Some trial which should awe thy folly's prime,—
—Thy word hath slain the Fawn of Erichswold !
Thy venom'd taunt awoke in Heinrich's breast
The accursed vow,—the deed this night confessed !
—The Mystery—the Covenant of old
No longer shields the House of Erichswold !
—Thy sire,—thy kindred and their guilty line
Oblivion shall cover !—hence their deeds
Shall pass amid the shadows of the Rhine,—
Their revels slumber where the vulture feeds !
—And as the pilgrim, pausing in his path,
Shall stand alone amid your songless halls ;
And wondering trace the chronicle of wrath
Inscribed upon the tempest-shrunk walls,—
Musing by what rude foe such vengeance came ?
No record through the silence shall proclaim ;—
Save in the cloven turret, blanched and riven,
Shall Ruin point with jagged hand to Heaven !
—But, Rheingold, unto thee a deeper fate,—
And mysteries more strange thy years await !
—'Tis destined unto thee to wander hence
In solitude and silence o'er the earth,—
Till Suffering, with her rude eloquence,
Shall give thy heart and spirit purer birth !—
It is thy portion, child,—to love,—in vain !—
Until within thy breast the torments reign,
Which thou hast mocked in others !—thou shalt learn

The Love thy bacchant-lip was wrought to spurn !
 —The Hallowed Fawn, though struck by human hand,
 Exists for thee, thy fate, and Heaven's command.
 Upon it borne, thou'rt destined hence to roam ;—
 Through all thy years, the woods shall be thy home !
 —To rove through Winter-wind and Summer-dawn,
 For ever onward with the Holy Fawn,
 Is hence thy fate !— but guardian-powers shall guide
 The phantom in its course, and by thy side
 Administer, to shield thee from despair,—
 —To teach thee Love and Purity their care !
 Through desert and through storm shall be thy way,
 Until thy sins be cleansèd here below ;—
 But neither storm, nor blast, nor beast of prey
 Shall harm thy flesh, nor shalt thou hunger know ;
 For 'tis unto the healing of thy soul
 That Heaven hath decreed thy mystic dole.—
 —In naming thee, thy Sire invoked a spell,
 In rash and boasting mood ; though warned by
 those
 Who marked the shade which o'er thy future fell,
 As from the shrouded Niebelungen rose
 Thy Name by him thus chosen !—and alas !
 Although no fairer wave upon the Rhine,
 Than those which o'er thy tender shoulders twine,—
 And blow upon thy brow a glossy veil,
 Like summer-spray when clustered in the gale !—
 —Thy youth,—thy years in mystery shall pass,—
 But 'tis that Love may o'er thy sins prevail ;—
 For learn, though Heaven wears its judgment-gloom,
 Without thy Sin,—thy Name had wrought no doom ;—
 —That Sin hath cast thee in the fiends' control
 Thy mystic name had drawn around thy soul !
 —At seasons will the Fawn forsake thee, child !
 And in such days,—where'er hath lain thy flight,—
 Be it by city or in region wild,—
 So soon the Phantom passes from thy sight,—
 There, broken for a space, shall lie the spell !
 —There shalt thou turn and seek with man to dwell !
 Be it as peasant, lady, or princess,
 Received in splendour or in lowliness.

—But as to whence thy journey?—whence thou art?

One Answer only shall thy lips impart

To question, frown, entreaty, or command;—

“I am a Wanderer from a distant land!”—

And let no tempter’s art thy lips beguile;—

If further thou disclose to threat or smile,

Shall Judgment fall upon thee in that day!—

Behold I charge thee, Daughter—heed,—obey.

—I told that Love within thy heart should reign,

And in such season shall thy love arise!

—I did foretell that thou should’st love in vain,

And feel the torments that thou would’st despise;

Yet not unanswered shall thy passion prove,

But,—in the day when he thou lov’st is thine,—

Perchance the Fawn will summon thee to rove?

In this no further to reveal is mine!—

I may but warn thee, when thou shalt behold

Before thee, child, the Fawn of Erichswold,

Be thou with peasant, baron, prince, or knight,

There shalt thou rise and follow in its flight;

—Although thy wedding-feast be set on high,—

In silence, Rheingold, shalt thou turn and fly!

—Would’st thou such things avert,—would’st thou
restrain

Thy Fate, until thy steps the altar gain,—

In such a day, would’st thou the spell be stayed,

—Avoid to pass by forest, wood, or glade!—

But if, when thou behold the Phantom nigh,—

Thy footsteps linger, bound by human tie,—

Beware thou, Rheingold!—child, within that hour,

A curse shall strike thee,—be it in cot or bower!

—For through thy years thy judgment is decreed

That from thy grievous Sin thy soul be freed!”—

Before the Woman’s word a deadening Cry,

From keep to tower, from moat to rampart rang;—

—Struck clashing by the Tempest from on high,

The castle-gates burst ope with brazen clang;—

And rose before each vassal’s wondering view,

The Fawn of white, ethereal shape, and hue!

There Rheingold leapt upon the Phantom’s form,

There forth she rode amid the rugged storm!

CANTO I.—THE WHITE FAWN OF ERICHSWOLD. 21

—The Thunders smote above her maiden-head,
And louder, deeper rolled the Winds their story,—
But o'er her radiant shoulders as she fled,
Her wild locks floating, lit the Storm with glory !

Now Love and War and wildered Passion blend
Their sighs within our Legend's mystery ;—
Now pass we unto other scenes, and bend
Our numbers to a mournful history.
—Behold our Prelude past, our Prologue told,
No more of Erich or the Erichswold.

For since that day Sir Erich yielded him
To merriment of most unseemly grade.
And on a night when mighty bowls did brim,
When all his goodly kindred were arrayed ;
—It came to pass that as they sang and played,
Above the towers did Fiery Planets shine !—
And that Great Hall in which they merry made
Sank down into the waters of the Rhine !—
Well-day !—St. Mary, reader,—be with thee and
thine !—

END OF PROLOGUE.

CANTO II.

THE MAY WANDERERS.

I.

FAR in the sunny Tyrol's mountain-land,
There ruled young Romont, Lord of Elfenstein.
Of every deed which fires the minstrel's hand,
His crest and spotless scutcheon were the sign ;
For Arms and Beauty found alike their shrine
Within the walls which rose above his cheer.
Nor would he Learning's graver joys resign,
Mirth, Wisdom, Wit, alike to him were dear ;
So gallantly he lived through many a youthful year.

II.

Not only Minnesingers thronged his hall.
From Innsbruck¹ city, forth from cloistered den,
Philosophy would seek his festival.
—He from the North Wind drew with poet's pen,—
The hardy Loves and Lays of Northern men.
And when the South Wind blew his dells among,
Oh ! all his tender valleys seemèd then
Flushed with the tones which to the South belong,—
The very waters rosed with warm Italian Song !—

¹ Innsbruck, called the "City of the Mountains," standing as it does at a considerable elevation in the Tyrolese Alps, by which it is completely shut round. Here is to be found the celebrated "Tomb of Maximilian."

This stone city crowns the glorious Valley of the Inn, about which our present scene is cast.

III.

The Spring was full in heaven, and the flowers
Were panting as the parted lips of May.
The woods lay knotted in their summer-bowers :
And, lightly wingèd by the throstle's lay,
The Breeze passed slowly through the brooklet's
spray
As through the tresses of a slumbering child,
A Spirit's hand in silent love might stray !
—Such image rose amid the waters wild,
As blew the wavy foam through moss and odours mild.

IV.

In the brown hollows of the oak there move
Dark murmuring heats,—with hum of shepherd-
strain.
Sweet Maytide-songs amid the branches rove,
With hoot and hollo down the windy lane !
—No cloud above,—wood, castle, abbey-fane,
As with the brow of God the heavens span !
—Far as the blue horizon crowned the plain,
Far onward as the yearning eye could scan,—
The Earth brow-bound with heaven, living looked on
man !

V.

But One, amid that spotless noon of May,
With gaze of solitude and wildered care,
Beside a moss-enfolded brooklet lay.
—It was a maiden's form,—most hushed and fair !
—Who is the Maid ? whose tresses seem to bear
The Winds in sleep upon them as they wave ?
And with their folds of motion rock the air ?
Full oft the gales with drowsy breath they laved,
Till by their touch enchanted, storms no longer raved !

VI.

Some years have passed,—some Winter-suns have
rolled,
Since, musing by the charmèd waves of Rhine,
We sang of Erich and the Erichswold,

His Rhenish damsels and his Rhenish wine.
Declared the forest's lore,—the olden sign,—
The covenant destroyed in heaven's sight,—
The doom pronounced upon his ancient line ;
And pictured in our song the scene of night,
Wherein his daughter fled upon her hidden flight.

VII.

The judgment which the Prophet-Maid fore-told
Upon her kindred and her sire should fall,
Did pass on Erich and the Erichswold.
No more the hot wine reddened to his call ;
But where the tongues of Revel rent the hall,
Rocking the palace with its hollow drone,
The lonely Torrent lashed the shattered wall ;—
—Hulloo of floods and whoop of wolf alone
Their rugged discourse held from minstrel's vacant
throne.

VIII.

But through these years beneath her destiny,
Hath Rheingold wandered with the phantom-fawn
For ever o'er her path of mystery ;—
By many a winter-glade and summer-lawn,
Through many a northern night and southern morn ;
Oft scaring with her presence swift and strange,
The wildered hunter as he sought the dawn,—
Hushing his frightened hounds, and bidding change
Their shouts to silence as they fled their wonted range.

IX.

But latterly her Fate with cunning Hand
Hath led her from the banks and woods of Rhine
Amid the sunny Tyrol's mountain-land,
Beside the groves and towers of Elfenstein.
—Oh subtly wrought, her Destinies combine
To cast her in young Romont's signiory !
—And oft when hazy Moons of Autumn shine,
Beneath the towers where he holds revelry,—
She wanders through the night!—alone—and musingly !

X.

¹ Some days have fled, since in the woody wild
 Of Elfenstein, the Fawn deserted her,
 And cast her as the forest's homeless child
 Bequeathed unto the oak which sheltered her,—
 Which seemed with out-stretched arms to pity her,
 And as she lay beneath it breathless thrown,
 With many a rough old voice to comfort her,
 And whisper to her she was not alone !
 Bending to rock her slumbers with its hoary tone.

XI.

Although transformed and of an aspect strange,
 Her raiment waxed not old.—At matin-tide,
 To search wild fruits and herbs, she oft would range ;
 Nor did she fear to roam the forest-side,
 Though gathering clouds or thunders she descried,
 Her nature proof to wind and tempest grown,
 And if she thirsted, to the brook she hied,
 Quaffed the luke wave by cooling lilies strown,
 And sang herself to sleep beside its bubbling stone.

XII.

Thus mountain, wood, and glen she roamed through-
 out,
 Till oft she heard, when pausing in the dale,
 Chiding the chase with long and merry shout—
 Young Romont's voice upon the summer-gale !
 Young Romont's voice amid the forest's wail,
 Blown freshly towards her with the mellow flow
 Of cheery horns from out the heathered vale ;—
 Until within those sounds there seemed to grow
 A Mystery—she feared,—yet, trembling, yearned to
 know !

¹ The author most humbly acknowledges that in Stanza X. he may be accused of having taken some great liberties in rhyme, in allowing four couplets to end in the syllable "her," without anything preceding it to complete a double rhyme. But as it would have been impossible to render this passage as the author desired, without such innovation (and especially as there is no positive *discord* to offend the ear, but rather too much *accord*), he hopefully asks the reader's indulgence.

XIII.

A wild sweet Warmth through all the woodland
broke,
As that warm Voice filled all the boughs and heather,
Each circling branch, each wide-expanding oak,
Seemed some Warm Presence—some strong arm
around her !
All part of Him whose Voice did then surround her ;
Whilst throbbed her breast with panting melody,
As if some bright and unknown bird had found her,
And settled there in fluttering ecstasy !—
She paused,—she trembled,—for, it seemed a mystery.

XIV.

Upon this red May-day, at noontide-hour,
Young Romont and his weary hunting-throng
With captured spoil retreating to a bower,
High banquet held the summer woods among ;
And, having pledged in goblet and in song,
Heavy with wine and with the mid-day sun,
They lay and slept the hazy hours along ;
Bidding the day its lazy purpose run,
Winged by their hunters' dreams, by hunters' toiling
won.

XV.

Trellised with light, the shadows of a bough,—
Whilst Romont slumbered on a mossy rise,—
Hung like a dancing wreath upon his brow,
As they fell circling o'er his closed eyes,
Or touched with airy grace his woodland guise.
—Rocked by a beating brook he lay, his dreams
Drawn through the mazy music of its sighs
Like shadows lengthened under slanting beams,—
So through the haze of sound each lengthened vision
streams !

XVI.

But Rheingold, chasing wild birds,—chance her guide,
All suddenly as she pursued her prize,

From out a tangled briar his form espied,
Extended smiling to the summer skies !—
She paused,—half stifling her bewildered cries ;
Then, gazing on this new-begotten dream,
Beheld how pillowed on that mossy rise,
His fair hair mingled with the May-day beam ;—
His whole reflected form cast throbbing in the stream.

XVII.

The stream which by his tender shade caressed,
Did seem to tremble at the touch and rise
With warm o'erflow of love in its blue breast !
From out her leafy covert she descries
Those boughs which veil him from the mid-day skies.
—She passed upon the lawn with noiseless tread,
Beheld their shadows fanning his soft eyes,—
Their dancing wreath about his temples shed !—
Then, swiftly, swiftly turned, and wondering,—weeping,
—fled !

XVIII.

And she it was who 'neath that noon of May,
With gaze of solitude and wildered care,
Beside a moss-enfolded brooklet lay,—
She was that maiden-form most hushed and fair,
And she the Maid whose tresses seemed to bear
The Winds in sleep upon them as they waved,
And with their folds of motion rocked the air !
Often the gales with drowsy breath they laved,
Till by their touch enchanted, storms no longer raved.

XIX.

Through windy woods and regions lonelier,
Where'er her path of mystery be led,
Here shall our Song a while abandon her ;
And pass we to the scene from which she fled,
Where Romont lay upon his mossy bed.
At length his dreams and sylvan slumbers brake.
He rose, with drowsy languors quickenèd ;

And freshly smiling, bade his squire awake
The throng,—each forest-youth his woody bower
forsake.

And as they woke, that cheery hunter-throng,
Thus dimly told the summer-glades along,
Through branch and briar rose their dreamy song.

HUNTER'S SONG.

I.

Sweet are the forests with summer descending,
—Sweet are the woods when the summer is blending
With the wild Laughter
Of Gretchen the Fair !

II.

Sweet are the songs of the woodlands ascending,
—Sweet are the songs of the forest when blending
With the wild Singing
Of Gretchen the Fair !

III.

Dark are the shades from the altar descending,
—But wilder their hue when their darkness is blending
With the White Figure
Of Gretchen the Fair !

IV.

Wild is the peace of the brooklet's low billows,
—But wilder the Peace of my breast when it pillows
All the wild slumbers
Of Gretchen the Fair !

XX.

Oh, fair was Romont ! in his brow of love
There seemed a mother's presence as he spake !
—But when some mighty thought within him strove,
His glance was battle,—and the eagle brake
From all his kindling features, to awake
The Deeds which from such glances most arise !
—So Love and Arms were mingled in his make ;

His brow was flushed with many a victor's prize,
But greyly lulled with shadow, were his loving eyes !

XXI.

Now as his retinue prepare their steeds
For homeward course, he summons to his side
(Whilst unto sleep a bustling toil succeeds,)
Rudenz his faithful squire, full often tried,
In whom he loved his counsels to confide ;—
Who many a secret trust and peril shared,
In youthly frolic oft his chosen guide ;
Within whose honest ears he lightly cared,
How freely spoken forth, his inward heart lay bared.

XXII.

But ere to tell their converse may be mine,
It will behove our Legend to disclose
Somewhat of days elapsed at Elfenstein.
Of certain marriage-intrigue, which arose
'Twixt Romont and a certain lord who chose
To seek him as a consort for his child,
—Though ancient ties had ranked him with his foes ;
Who oft our hero's yielding thoughts beguiled
With doubled-toned address and parlance subtly mild.

XXIII.

'Twas Siegerfrid, the Duke of Bergenfeld,
Who by the ¹ Northern Adriatic shore,
Full many an ancient rock and forest held,
With such dominion as his fathers bore.
—Without a son, and trembling to restore
The safety of his lineal descent,—
Having encountered Romont oft of yore
At Austrian tournaments in the Vale of Trent,—
To gain him and his lands, forthwith his schemes were
blent.

¹ It must be remembered that the region here described is wholly imaginary.

XXIV.

It was for one his only progeny,
He would alliance seek with Romont's Name,
—His daughter Yolande, known to minstrelsy
For courage,—exploits, attributes which claim
A sterner record than fair lady's fame.
—Whene'er she issued ordinance, or gave
Opinion (much her wont) through all her frame,
The lioness moved ; and few would dare to brave
Her judgment when it rose, all meaner voice to waive.

XXV.

Robust in mind, she was robust in charms ;
And from her shoulders round with majesty,
There drooped a pair of most heroic arms.
—Her brow, most broad with dread capacity,
An unrolled volume of sagacity !
—In awful numbers were her exploits sung
Through Inn's wild Valley, Romont's seignory.
In no mere love-verse might her charms be rung,
Her mighty powers demanded lays of fiercer tongue !

XXVI.

Now with his daughter, through these summer-days,
Duke Siegerfrid was Romont's honoured guest ;
And ever when occasion oped him ways,
With presents, ditties, speeches subtly-dressed,
Her union with Elfenstein he pressed.
—With smile and whisper ever would she come
To Romont's presence. At her Sire's request,
Anon, arise her queenly lute to thrum,
With tone majestic bidding meaner art be dumb.

XXVII.

Ever his special partner in the chase,
Ever his special partner in the dance ;
To all his humours she pretended grace,
Blushed at his touch and trembled to his glance.

With innocence affected, to enhance
Her charms she strove, to lull their fiercer beam.
—At tourney crowned his helm and kissed his lance ;
And though of all his bards the centre theme,
Most subtly of her fame unconscious would she seem.

XXVIII.

Now Romont's heart, though generously human,
Was proof to many frailties of the breast ;—
As yet for nought within the World of Woman,
Had he emotions, thought or care expressed !—
Save that in Song, contending with the rest,
Their virtues he would paint, their charms compare ;
But if some stronger hand the prize should wrest,
And from his chords the victor's laurel bear,
The pangs of worsted bards but little would he share.

XXIX.

Nor question if the virtues and the charms
Thus sung, did live, or but in song appear ;—
The sterner, broader poesy of arms
Wrapt all his soul, and veiled him from the sear
Of those who toil through many a withered year,
Love's sickly draughts of ecstasy to sip,—
—He better loved to track and win the deer,
Than any smile upon a lady's lip,
And roundly mocked the tongues of mazy courtèship.

XXX.

Till many whispered that full passion's power
Within his closed breast would never reign ;
And trembled that they should behold the hour,
When at his death his childless house should wane
Into oblivion ;—when their eyes in vain
Should seek for further Lords of Elfenstein !
Until they rose beseeching him to deign
(Although to none he might his heart resign),
At least bestow his hand, and save his tottering line.

XXXI.

And thus when Yolande graced his tournaments,
They yearned that she might charm away his mood,
And triumph o'er his stoic sentiments.—
To this they urged, petitioned him and sued,
Until at length for very peace he wooed ;
And to appease importunate demand
’Twas whispered, swore by Mass and Holy Rood,
That Yolande should be Lady of his land,
And should at least possess his Name, his wealth, his
hand.

XXXII.

Amid the many vast and noble halls
Which echoed neath the Towers of Elfenstein,
The mightiest within the massive walls,—
Surpassing all in chivalric design,
Was one, appointed as the special shrine
Of Song.—Competing who should reign as greatest,
Here met the Bards of Danube and the Rhine.—
“Hall of the Minstrels,” and the “Hall of Contest ;”
Such name it bore,—the scene of many a minstrel’s
conquest.

XXXIII.

For every year, within the month of May,
Here Knight and Lady sat in festal throng,
To witness every bard his power display,
And hear melodious battles wrought in song.
Of each it was required their laws among,
To sing the Lady to his heart most dear ;—
And He who proved his hand most subtly strong,
Was crowned with laurel by that Lady dear,
Whom he had sung, and reigned the Monarch of the
Year.

XXXIV.

Though Romont had some while in secret spoken
With Siegerfrid and others of his views,
And granted unto Yolande many a token
(In song and ditty from his sprightly muse,)

Of that alliance which he deigned to choose ;
'Twas yet unuttered in the common ear,—
Save Rumour somewhat hastened to diffuse
The tidings, whilst his vassals far and near,
From out his bearing towards her, mighty hopes did
rear.

XXXV.

But thus at length the Proclamation rang
From tower to cot, where'er he held his sway,
Thus broadly raised upon the Trumpet's clang :—
“ That in the Hall of Contest,—on the Day
When every knight and minstrel should display
The highest songs and glories of his Power ;—
Romont of Elfenstein within his lay,
Would sing the Maid he loved ;—and in that hour,
That Maiden whom he sang, with heart and hand
endower.”

XXXVI.

To-morrow's dawn the Day of Contest hails !—
So all beneath those warm Tyrolean skies,
Far as the Name of Romont ruled the vales,—
Waited with hushed assent and mute surmise,
When in the Hall of Contest he should rise,
To hear the Lady Yolande sung his bride !
—When thus awaking 'mid the forest's sighs,
Rudenz, his squire, he summoned to his side,
Him in whose faith he loved his counsels to confide.

XXXVII.

Now whilst the huntsmen roused the grazing steeds,
He drew the boy into a dim recess,
Where the swift brook gave voices to the reeds ;
—Here raised his glance as if he would confess
Some secret thought, some burdening care express,
Then paused, as hushed by some restraining fear !
—Bent o'er his hound with measured slow caress,—
Then turning, leant upon his hunting-spear,
And silent, gazed upon the waters bubbling near.

XXXVIII.

Somewhile they stood thus voiceless, till the boy
 Remarking his unquiet mood, exclaimed :—
 “Some untold care, or some unspoken joy,—
 My lord, lies trembling on thy lip unnamed !
 —Whence, whence this mood ?—oh, have I ever
 shamed
 The trust which thou hast deigned to impart ?
 —What spell, or hidden mystery hath claimed
 The silence of my lord ? that now his heart
 Is closed ?—whene’er did I from holden faith depart ?

XXXIX.

“But now, thy glance was full, and in thy face,
 Thy burden rose half-uttered to mine ear ;
 Now only wildered silence may I trace !
 —I do entreat thee let me freely hear
 What strange suspicion doth mine honour sear ?
 Or take me to thy confidence of old,
 And let thy heart within thy speech appear,
 For unto me thy heart was ever told !”
 Lord Romont starting, cried : “Rheingold ! oh, Rheinè-
 gold !”

XL.

Bewildered by the mystic sound, the squire
 An instant speechless looked upon his lord ;
 Then fearful, cried : “Some dark, bewildering fire
 Moves in thy brain !—I prithee speak,—accord
 That trust which ever was my dear reward,
 When I have scheme or peril shared with thee !”
 —With troubled gesture Romont paced the sward,
 But paused at length beneath an alder-tree,
 And cried : “Oh, Rudenz, hearken !—to a Mystery !

XLI.

“Men deem that I am little moved by Woman,—
 That I with scoffer’s thought their loves deride,
 If not with speech, and that those passions human
 By Heaven to my spirit are denied !

—And until late, perchance was Truth allied
With this their credence ;—I had little care,
And would as lief have taken for my bride
The Lady Yolande, truth ! as any fair,—
Since common voice required that I my name should
share.

XLII.

“ Not positively hating her, methought
I loved her,—with at least as great a love
As ever woman in my spirit wrought.
Then to be smitten with her charms I strove,
From cheek to brow my wandering eyes would rove,
The whole as matchless willingly accept :
—Amidst her locks my drowsy hand I wove,
Till sudden languors o’er her beauties crept,
And worn with very labouring to love, I slept !

XLIII.

“ I sang sonnets to every stream and cloud,
Hoping to catch some amorous infection ;—
In all opinion unto her I bowed,—
Lay down a lamb before her stern correction !
—Oft reasoning thus to cheer me in dejection,
—That whilst I strove with these embarrassments
I did but learn the Grammar of Affection,
And should, once having passed the rudiments,
Acquire with ease the very lengthiest sentiments !

XLIV.

“ They now attend that on the Day of Contest,
Yolande will be my Song ! my Bride !—achieve
Upon these lands her subtly-carried conquest ;—
—But I will yet my purchased soul retrieve !
Oh, little do their itching ears conceive
The name which shall be foremost on my lyre,
Which shall my homage on that Day receive !
The Name whose utt’rance shall my Song inspire
With tones which shall confound my Yolande and her
sire !”

XLV.

Then closer to his side he drew the youth,
Continuing, "In confided trusts of old,
I ne'er have found thee wanting in thy truth;
So harken!—unto thee will I unfold
A mystic vision which I did behold,—
(For were it vision or reality,
My reason yet disputes;) perchance when told,
'Twill clearer rise from out its mystery,—
And I shall feel if it were truth or fantasy.

XLVI.

"Some days now sped, as we reposed from chase,
—As ye lay slumbering in the midday sun;—
I waking lay, whilst troubled thoughts did trace
Their shadows through my mind,—and one by one,
Forgotten years anew their course would run,
Bidding Forgotten Life within me move!
—I thought on Yolande, who my troth had won,
And felt, as thus my wildered spirit strove,—
That I *loved* nothing,—yet,—that I had power to love!

XLVII.

"Remembering how I had beheld the deer,
When it lay dying in the rugged hollow,—
Marked in its streaming eyes the heavy tear,
And felt that I could love it for its sorrow!
—And musing, from this memory did I borrow
Such strange reflections and such nameless fear,
—Methought,—I would not hunt upon the morrow,—
For ever in mine eyes there swam the tear
Which I that day beheld upon the stricken deer!

XLVIII.

"Until I yearned to love some living thing
For ever, as I loved the stag that day!—
Some Creature that would tears and sorrows bring,
And on my bosom would those sorrows lay,—

Making my breast the stronger, in that they
 Around it clung in tears and heaviness !
 —Teaching my heart a broader power to stay—
 From out that Burden's leaning weariness !
 Giving my spirit life,—and Strength from out *its* Weak-
 ness !

XLIX.

“ So many things I pondered as ye slept ;—
 And as the dying stag I musèd over,
 Wondered if Lady Yolande *ever* wept,—
 And if I saw her weep, if I could love her ?
 —But those o'er-ruling majesties which hover
 Around my lady's presence when she nears,—
 Those queenly beauties which her charms discover,
 Are such as melt in fire and not in tears !—
 She has no dread,—and none can love who have no
 fears !

L.

“ At length aweary with my restless mood,
 I rose and wandered forth amid the dales ;—
 —In many a sigh and speech of solitude,
 I gave my burden to the summer-gales ;—
 And as they murmuring, spread their giddy sails
 Upon their spotless tones there seemed to hang
 Some Name Unknown !—blown upward from the
 vales,
 Some Name Unknown through all the branches sang,
 Some mystic Name Unknown—through rock and
 hollow rang !

LI.

“ Within its heart the forest seemed to fold
Something—I knew not *what*—that I could love !—
 —But from my sight the Creature to withhold !
 —So mightily this thought within me strove,—
 I madly sped to traverse bower and grove,
 Feeling that if my fury suffered naught
 To quench it,—if I yet should further rove,
 The woods would yield the Mystery I sought—
 Some Being there contained—or by my frenzy wrought !

LII.

“Onward I struggled, heedless of my toil,
 Through briary thickets and untrodden way,
 Where jagged roots upheaved the knotted soil ;
 Until before me rose with sudden ray
 A dell, which seemed the very Bower of Day !
 —At slightest tread the earth around me here
 So charged with undiscovered music lay,
 I paused, and trembling stood in wildered fear
 My step would strike some chord too deep for mortal
 ear !

LIII.

“At length somewhat advancing listlessly,
 About my path did myriad streamlets throng,
 And seemed in softly low monotony
 To hollow all the murmuring lawns with song !
 —For as I gazed the verdant banks among,
 So tender was each slope which circled me,
 It seemed beneath some music wildly long
 The scene had melted into rhapsody—
 Falling in shape and hollow with the melody,—

LIV.

“Rising and falling with the wavy tone,
 Until it was an *Image* of the *Song* !—
 But I have more to tell,—to thee alone,
 Oh, Rudenz,—would I speak it,—yet I long
 To utter it to thee, and truth ! should wrong
 Thine olden-trusted virtue, to conceal
 My heart from thee ;—no more will I prolong
 My wary silence, but to thee reveal
 The Thing which could so well my lips before thee
 seal.

LV.

“At length I turned a hillock to ascend,
 Upon whose summit netted leaves and sprays
 Did in a sombre curtain darkly blend.
 —There gently kneeling in the woodland haze
 I parted with my hand the leafy maze ;—

When,—Mary, Hail !—within a dim recess,
Arose a sudden Vision to my gaze !—
—So strange—with only cunning swift address,
Could I the startled shout upon my lips repress !

LVI.

“ One lone and silent,—in those woods of May,
With mystic gaze of solitude and care,
Beside a moss-enfolded brooklet lay,—
It was a maiden’s form most hushed and fair !—
—A maiden’s form whose tresses seem to bear
The Winds in sleep upon them as they waved !
And with their folds of motion rocked the air
To slumber !—as with drowsy breath they laved,
And in their tender bonds the drooping breeze en-
slaved !

LVII.

“ Fantastic was her garb,—her visage pale.
—Beneath an arch of low-depending trees,
She sat, and harkened to the forest’s wail,
As if no other song her ear might please !
And seemed each measure of the brook to seize,
Gazing from out her features wildly lone !
Whilst every wavelet hollowed in the breeze,
From out its round melodious throat gave tone.
Through mazy paths of Sound were rill and heather
blown.

LVIII.

“ And as she lay within her leafy nest,
Low-trellised boughs around her form did creep,
Till as a curtained cradle was her breast
Where Life lay smiling in its rosy sleep !
Sunk in a spotless slumber, richly deep !
—Whilst from her brow depending, her wild locks
Above those slumbers seemed sweet watch to keep !
And far around her, scattered o’er the rocks,
The fearless wood-birds sang in giddy countless flocks.

LIX.

“ Deeming that I beheld the Queen of Fays,—
Or Lurley wandered from her native Rhine,
I silent stood, and only dared to gaze !—
At length drew back, confounded at the sign,
And closed the curtains of the dark wood-bine.
—But sudden impulse stayed me in my flight,
Resolve that I would not my search resign !
That I would know if she were living sprite,
Or phantom pictured there by subtle Frenzy’s might !

LX.

“ So fiercely back I hied,—resought the bower,—
—Tore ope the trellised curtain,—dashed aside
All obstacle,—and, hot with passion’s power,
Stood not for stream or stone,—until the tide
Of that fair brook athwart my path did glide ;—
—Then wildly glanced amid the hollow shade
Where she reclining lay,—but naught descried !
—Oh, she had fled !—and though I madly strayed,
All vainly did I seek for phantom, sprite, or maid !

LXI.

“ But though no form responded to my cries,
Around me wafted in the forest’s tone,—
This Sound,—this Name—far-murmuring seemed to
rise,—
‘ Rheingold ! ’—‘ Rheingold ! ’—as I stood alone ;
That Name I heard through all the Summer blown !
—That Name was by the massy torrent told,—
Whilst every wave which lashed its hoary stone,
Within its purple waters seemed to fold
That mystic Name—that Sound of wonder—Rheinè-
gold !

LXII.

“ Upon the morrow, in the Hall of Song,
Now harken Rudenz !—thus my will is set !—
When knight and lady in assembled throng,
To hear me sing my chosen bride, are met ;—

Then will I leap from out the spoiler's net,—
 Then will I tear me from their subtle hold,
 And Yolande and all mummery forget !—
 —When they await to hear my strain unrolled,
 Then will I sing of naught—of naught save Rheinè-
 gold !

LXIII.

“ Then forth unto the forest will we hie,—
 But not with hawk or hound to head the chase ;—
 To-morrow must we hunt more gallantly,—
 —The Prize a maiden's heart !—a maiden's face !
¹ St. Hubert !—we shall lead no common race !—
 And though the night succeed unto the day,
 Until that maiden shall our triumph grace,
 Oh, never homeward will I turn my way ;—
 If there I hunt and wander till my hairs be grey !

LXIV.

“ Perchance it is a purpose madly wrought,
 But not so mad as that ordained of late,
 To yield my freedom—sell my soul for naught,
 To one whom busy kindred sought to mate,—
 Whom, whilst I strove to love, I yearned to hate ;
 —Nay, I prefer my Madness to such Reason !—
 Let Yolande and her sire the morn await,
 And, when they hear my ditty in its season,
 Receive it as they will,—as melody or treason !”

LXV.

With wonder speechless, Rudenz scarce replied ;
 But trained unto the humours of his knight,
 Ever regarding him his master-guide
 In thought or counsel, pageant, feast or fight,—
 So that his ways did with his will unite,
 But little did he brook whate'er event
 Or new adventure kept his spirit light ;
 Nor would he heed what sudden sentiment
 Possessed his youthly lord in chase or tournament.

¹ St. Hubert,—the Patron of hunting.

LXVI.

The steeds prepared, Lord Romont homeward hies.
—Oh, many a southern smile his lip caressed,
Matching his thoughts with the sweet summer-skies.
And every throbbing stream his glance addressed,
Seemed echoing the pulses of his breast.
—Deep—wildly glorious was the Life which rose
Within his spirit as he onward pressed !
—He felt within the distant wood's repose
Lay Somewhat hidden which—the morrow should
disclose.

LXVII.

On every branch, on every leaf and stone
For him young Love with mazy finger wrote !—
—Oh, Passion from the passing breeze was blown,
And from his horn full many a cheery note
Drew music from the swallow's mellow throat,
And, as a message to the roving One
Did freshly o'er the May-day woodlands float !—
To her a Message that the morrow's sun
Should bring to her a World of new-born Life begun !

LXVIII.

So onward rode the boy with merry tread.
—And lightly on his breast the breezes lay,
As lightly as would slumber her fair head !
And softly on his brow the sunbeams play,
As softly as her dancing hands would stray
Amidst his locks, with their warm touch to tell
The love which might no other speech essay.
—So gaily Romont sped through bower and dell,
Until athwart his path, the castle-shadows fell.

END OF CANTO II.

CANTO III.

THE HALL OF CONTEST.

I.

Now pass we to the morrow, and the scene
 Where in the Hall of Contest are arrayed
 A thousand throngs equipped in knightly sheen,
 With baldrick, pennon, shield and scarf displayed,
 And many a darkly-gemmed, though sheathèd blade.
 Here Song and Arms in mingled glory shine.
 Far as the blushing hosts of knight and maid
 With living wreath the column's base entwine,
 Behold the assembled bards of Danube and the Rhine.

II.

Vast is the hall ;—its brooding arches gape
 O'er columns ranged in herculean pile,—
 Columns which seem to image in their shape
 The massive Songs which murmur through their aisle !
 —Those mighty domes of ancient gothic style,
 Bent low with giant echos seem to bow !
 And looks each full expanding arch the while,
 Broad with heroic song and thundered vow,—
 Broad,—open, wild and living as a minstrel's brow !

III.

Full many a marble stair arrests the sight,
 And with its dreamy thread the column binds.
 —Of wavy marble wrought, from flight to flight
 The chastely circling terrace slowly winds.

—With Song and Love in all their hearts and minds,
 Each minstrel champion hastes his foe to greet,
 Or in the fair some inspiration finds.
 —Each knight reposing at his lady's feet,
 With Song—with Song and Love that lady's glance
 doth meet.

IV.

With heavy breath, dark perfumes of the East
 In purple fragrance roll above the throng,
 Purpling the golden glory of the feast !
 And broken, rise the pillared domes along
 Like disembodied Dreams or Shapeless Song !
 Robing the arch in cloudy mystery,—
 With forms colossal,—shadows weirdly long.
 —Whilst velvets spread from hall to gallery,
 Soften the passer's tread with touch of luxury ;

V.

Till lightest movement is to tread on dreams,
 Within that Hall of Love and Minstrelsy,
 Where youthly Valour lit by Beauty, beams.
 —But mark !—above all others' majesty,
 Enthroned the centre of the pageantry,
 Is Lady Yolande with her crafty Sire ;—
 Waiting to crown her measured subtlety
 With That which shall arise on Romont's lyre,
 —The Union and the Love they deem his song will fire.

VI.

Nor do they think alone,—nor hath their hope
 From simple self-accorded counsel sprung ;—
 —Where'er a gossip may with rumour cope,
 It is accepted by the common tongue,
 That truly Lady Yolande shall be sung
 This day, the sovereign-bride of Elfenstein.
 —Such tidings through the Vale of Inn are rung ;—
 Accounted truth from every outward sign,
 Amid the assembled bards of Danube and the Rhine.

VII.

Seeming contented with his lowly seat,
Thralled in the stately shadow of her eyes,
Upon a velvet couch at Yolande's feet
In festal garb arrayed, Lord Romont lies.
—But oft her pressing converse he defies,
And rising, passes forth from guest to guest.
Now to some friendly grasp his voice replies,
And now it rings, to merriment addressed ;—
Oh, none as he could answer courtesy or jest !

VIII.

For fair was Romont, in his brow of love
There seemed a Mother's presence as he spake !
—But when some mighty thought within him strove,
His glance was battle, and the eagle brake
From all his kindling features, to awake
The deeds which from such glances most arise !
—So Love and Arms were mingled in his make ;
—His brow was flushed with many a victor's prize,
But greyly lulled with shadow, were his loving eyes !

IX.

His broad-linked belt was jagged with the blaze
Of many a ruby's fire, and topaz brought
From Orient in the old crusading days,
When 'neath their country's Cross his fathers fought.
—His light cote-hardie¹ of blue velvet wrought,
Shaping its lustre with his youthful grace,
As he commanded, jested, or besought,
Shone with each movement of his merry pace,
And seemed his boyish strength in witching form to
trace.

X.

Some hours had passed upon the festal scene,
Ere thus we lift it to the reader's gaze.
—No more preluding banquets intervene ;—
It is the hour when each within his lays

¹ The Cote-hardie " was a species of tunic peculiar to the 14th and 15th centuries, reaching to the middle of the thigh, and fitting the body. It was ungirded at the waist, but over it the square-linked military belt was worn, drooping aslant.

The prowess of his Fantasy displays,
And mute attention throbs in every face.
—Upon a platform strewn with leafy bays,
The blazoned Herald from his lofty place,
Raises his haughty trump with long majestic grace :

XI.

Whilst flowers around him, shed by ladies' hands,
Bosom his path with rose-buds and young May !
—Smiling from out their hazy breath he stands,
His gaudy surcoat glinting in the ray
Whose shadows o'er his gilded pennant play,
Tipping with light his crest and spurred heels.—
But now his lifted trump with martial bray
Upon the air a rugged larum deals,
Until with brazen sound the very ether reels !

XII.

Thus to the quivering echo he replies :—
“ The Hour appointed and the list behold,
Ye who would here contend for Beauty's prize !
—Be lady sung or ancient legend told,
For him who shall the deepest strain unfold,
Lo ! with the Victor's Crown is Beauty nigh ! ”
—Again from out his trump of burnished gold,
Three broad-toned blasts pierce eagle-like on high !—
And wild emotions flash from every youthful eye.

XIII.

The chiefs are seated, and the busy roll
Of voices hushed.—Anon, once more ascends
The Herald's Challenge ;—then each waking soul
Leaps to the conflict,—every minstrel blends
His song ;—uniting chorus broadly rends
The dome above them, till it rocks with sound.
—Upon his lyre in thoughtful posture bends
Romont apart,—his chords with silence bound ;
Awaiting thus the Hour which many shall confound.

XIV.

Then in succession many a bard arose,
 Glanced in his Lady's eyes and smote his lyre;
 And Poesy o'er her path of homage flows.
 —Now bursting plaudits rouse the minstrel's fire;
 Now Beauty blushes as her words inspire.
 And still with Love and Arms the columns rang,
 Till Romont's favourite minstrel, Rugenmeier,
 His ditty marshalled by the trumpet's clang,
 Enthroned beside his lord,—bent o'er his harp and
 sang:—

EURYANTHE.

I.

I beheld fair Euryanthe,
 —She the theme of song and story,—
 With her eyes of maiden splendour
 Answering the Sun of May!
 Whilst above them in their glory,
 Lay her brow of spotless grandeur
 Spread like Opening Day.

II.

The Hun besieged her father's tower,
 Sacked and plundered hall and bower;
 And when burning roof and rafter
 Smouldered in the setting-sun,—
 Child and father stood in chains
 Before the Monarch of the Hun.

III.

And upon the conqueror's tongue
 Thus his will barbaric rung:—
 "Lo! thy captive Sire, oh, daughter!
 Wouldst thou shield him from the flames,
 Thou amid the flames shalt suffer,
 —For this day our toil and slaughter
 One of ye for vengeance claims!"

IV.

Then her father strove to stay her,—
 For he saw her purpose gather
 In her eyes of maiden splendour;
 As the setting sun shone o'er her
 And the erected stake before her!

V.

But those eyes of maiden splendour
 Answered to that Sun of May ;
 Forth she cried, as in his bondage
 At her feet the old man lay ;—
 " I will suffer ! for—I love him !"
 And her spotless brow above him
 Shone like Opening Day.

VI.

Then the Conqueror cried : " Release her !"
 On his knees he fell before her :—
 " Euryanthe ! Euryanthe !
 Thou hast taught me Love and Mercy !"
 Prostrate at her feet, he cries.
 " Euryanthe,—deign to teach me
 More of Love and more of Mercy,
 Till my spirit shall have gathered
 All the Mystery of thine Eyes !"

VII.

Broadly from his folds of fire,—
 Broadly looked the Western Sun
 On the Maiden and her Sire,
 And the Monarch of the Hun.
 —And her eyes of maiden splendour
 Answered to that Sun of May !
 For she cried as hushed and prostrate
 At her feet the conqueror lay,
 " God be witness !—I will love him !"
 And her spotless brow above him
 Shone like Opening Day !

XV.

He ceased ;—a hundred acclamations told
 His hand had struck on every heart which heard ;
 Far through the halls, in rustling murmur rolled
 The busy voice of approbation stirred.
 —Until beneath the Herald's pausing word
 Their silence re-assumed its majesty,—
 Upon the minstrel Arnulph now conferred.
 A youth who sang in elfish fantasy,
 These legend-numbers, wild with Ocean-mystery !

ADELHEID.

I.

Wrapt in vision lies the ocean in the moon's descending light,
Its drowsy waters rocked in all the minstrelsy of Night.
Low bend the waves—like kings which cast their crowns upon
the shore,
They prostrate fall with shattered diadems, solemnly and hoar.
—From out the crannied Castle on the Cliff strange voices rise,
And coldly stream its moony turrets up the winter-skies !
—Within that hall there reigns a Silence and a Mystery,—
—There Orla King of Tempests wooed the Maiden of the Sea !
Adelheid !—Adelheid !—
Hark !—the Name of Ocean's Bride
Doth in the wave and tempest ride !
Hark !—along the sea-washed walls
Dripping from the stone it falls !—

II.

The broken ramparts glanced of old with feudal blazonry,
Within the silent hall there reigned a king in majesty.
A king who loved to press the Ocean with a conqueror's heel,
Whilst shone the lightnings as a crown about his helm of steel !
—But now with hollow whoop and bay athwart the withered stone,
Clamour the floods like beaten hounds about his shattered
throne !
—For with him reigned his only child, the Princess Adelheid,
—His name is known no more,—and Hers—doth in the tempest
ride !

III.

Beside the waves she loved to wander,—would the feast forsake,
To hear the waters revel, and the jagged surges break.
—When hushed in night and slumber was the poet's rhapsody,
Then forth she passed alone, to hear the Ocean's minstrelsy ;
And as she watched the billows in their stately measure bow,
Their Purity and Grandeur seemed to live upon her brow !
—Upon her brow to live in Silence and in Mystery !
Until the minstrels callèd her the Maiden of the Sea.

IV.

Within his castle sat the king,—a bridegroom at his side,
And at his feet arrayed with flowers, the Princess Adelheid ;
Arrayed with flowers for nuptial, and smiling from the throng
Of maidens who attended her with festival and song.
—Oh, golden was that nuptial, and well the banquet sped,
And merrily through heart and eye the winged pageant fled.
—But vain was priest and benison, and vain their revelry,
For Orla King of Tempests loved that Maiden of the Sea.

V.

The bridegroom they had chosen was the Monarch of the Isles;
 A youthly king who loved the maiden and her sea-born smiles!
 Who wandering by the ocean, as she listed to the wave,
 There paused,—within its hearing, there his heart and promise
 gave.

She loved him, and as pageants thronged about her father's
 throne,

Her eyes unmoved by feast or song, were raised to him alone,—
 To him with all their Silence—all their Ocean-Mystery!
 —But Orla King of Tempests loved that Maiden of the Sea.

VI.

Amid the feast the storm arose, the ocean burst its chain
 And menaced with its rising flood that Castle by the main;
 And frightened vassals sought the hall wherein their monarch sang,
 And told him how the turrets trembled—how the tempest rang!
 —Then hurriedly the face of lord and reveller he scanned,
 And cried, his daughter at his feet—his falchion in his hand,
 —“Though Death the Conqueror besiege me in my father's hall,
 I yield not whilst I have his voice—to raise his battle-call!”
 —But vain was axe and falchion, vain was heart and gallantry,
 For Orla King of Tempests loved that Maiden of the Sea.

VII.

Arrested is the festival,—confusion greets the bride;
 The tables are o'erthrown, the song—the goblet cast aside!
 Then bluely through the blackened hall the quickened lightnings
 stare,
 And flash in ghastly splendour on the jewelled nobles there!
 —Down clave the thunders,—far in reddened ruin the walls were
 cast—
 By hands unseen the splintered stones were scattered to the
 blast,
 And onward—onward with the Storm full many a soul did flee—
 For Orla King of Tempests loved that Maiden of the Sea!

VIII.

Wrapt in vision lies the ocean in the Moon's descending light,
 Its drowsy waters rocked in all the minstrelsy of Night.
 Low bend the waves—like kings which cast their crowns upon
 the shore,
 They prostrate fall with shattered diadems, solemnly and hoar.
 —From out the crannied Castle on the Cliff strange voices rise,
 And coldly stream its moony turrets up the winter-skies:—

Within that hall there reigns a Silence and a Mystery ;—
 —Thus Orla King of Tempests wooed the Maiden of the Sea.
 Adelheid !—Adelheid !—
 Hark !—the Name of Ocean's Bride
 Doth in the wave and tempest ride !
 Hark ! along the sea-washed walls
 Dripping from the stone it falls !

XVI.

Hushed by the dreamy youth's fantastic strain,
 Voiceless, they mark his darkly-radiant eyes,
 Where weird Imagination holds her reign
 Beneath his long dim lashes !—then doth rise
 A storm of homage, for they richly prize
 Such song as this, and well the bard revere
 Who in the field of mystic legend vies.
 Rugged the lay, but to their fancies dear,—
 And such as German hearts most wildly love to hear !

XVII.

Then Rudolph rose, a youth who ne'er did sing
 And lightly cared for minstrelsy's rewards ;—
 But loved to lie on heather-banks in Spring,
 Whilst fell the dews of April o'er his chords,
 Amid the murmurs of the woody swards.
 —Some tearful light seemed ever lingering
 Within his glance !—the multitude accords
 A ready silence to his offering ;
 And thus he sings ;—strange Thought—his features
 shadowing.

SOLITUDE.

I.

I passed beside the Norman Church,
 Above me sang the vesper-bell ;—
 And as I passed beneath its song,
 —Arose a Love—I ne'er may tell !—

II.

More brilliant glow the diamond sheds,
 Unfostered by the sun-god's ray,—
 Its innate glories fuller rise,
 Unsmitten by the Eye of Day ;—

III.

And so a fate decrees that Love
Must e'er be silent,—unconfessed,—
But, purer in its Solitude,
The treasure lies within my breast !

IV.

And oft beside the Norman Church,
I pass beneath that vesper-bell ;—
With Love which / alone may feel,—
With Love which /t alone may tell !

XVIII.

Some silence followed Rudolph's lonely song,
As if mysterious shadows it could raise
From out the Past ; and brooding sat the throng,
As if a phantom passed before their gaze !
—Awhile all mute and voiceless was the blaze
Of falchion, scarf and jewel ;—till there rose
The Minstrel Reigenhardt, who in his lays
Delighted most to swell the strain of those
Who loved the secret depths of Nature to disclose.

XIX.

Dark was his form, with Thought and Vigil grey,
And nightly wanderings in wood and glen ;—
And in the lines which o'er his features lay,
So Nature seemed her mysteries to pen,
He stood a beacon to the minds of men.
—A deeper, broader, longer silence stole
Upon the bowed and listening pageant, when
He smote his chords, and like a thunder-roll
Brake forth the mighty burden of his master-soul.

XX.

When he has ceased, no greeting loud or long,
But Silence doth her stately homage rear,
As if his strain had woke some *inward* Song
Within their breasts, to which they still gave ear,

Although *his* voice had ceased !—so did appear
The mute expression of their wandering eyes.
—Then others strive,—but now the moments near
When at the Herald's word shall Romont rise ;
And scarce her eager thoughts may Yolande now disguise.

XXI.

At length before the trump's announcing tone,
Young Elfenstein with wild, abstracted air,
Advances from the foot of Yolande's throne.
—Oh, wondering is the gaze of knight and fair
As yet his voiceless chords unroused, bear
The Secret which their music shall disclose.
—But all confounded and aghast they stare,
When thus his song in mystic measure flows,—
And deeper verse by verse their hushed amazement
grows !

SONG OF ROMONT.

I.

Sweet is the thrush in Rheingold's ear !—
Pure is the lily on Rheingold's breast,—
Red are the waters glancing near
By her rosy feet caressed !

II.

Hushed is the Night when Rheingold sleeps,
Hushed as the motion of Rheingold's breast !
Hushed are the moss-grown woodland-steeps,
Shadowed by her form at rest !

III.

Fresh is the Dawn when Rheingold wakes,
Fresh as the panting of Rheingold's breast !—
Fresh and warm as the smile which breaks
From her lips to heaven's guest.

IV.

Loud are the winds o'er crag and deep,—
Soft is their passage o'er Rheingold's breast !
Rocked by her bosom will they sleep,
There the low winds shape their nest !

V.

Full are the rays of Summer-tide,
Lowly they tremble on Rheingold's breast,—
Lowly they slant her form beside,
By its gentle shadow pressed.

VI.

Deep is the light in Rheingold's glance,
Deep is my Image in Rheingold's breast !
—Pure is my Spirit through revel and dance,
By her wandering Thoughts caressed !

XXII.

Then Siegerfrid the Duke of Bergenfeld
Leapt from his seat, his hand upon his sword ;—
Then darkly was the flow of song dispelled,
And knights and squires around their chieftains poured
In hot contending streams, whilst loudly roared
The bay of voices fierce with argument !
No tongue could aught of reasoning afford,—
Some gazed,—some questioned in bewilderment,—
And some forsook the lyre for deadlier instrument !

XXIII.

For Yolande's followers in this beheld
Insult and treason to their Lady's cause ;
And all who wore the crest of Bergenfeld,
Forsook the strife of Song for darker wars,
Which seemed to rise amid the sullen pause
That followed on the ceasing of the lay ;
Though none save Subtlety's intriguing laws
Could hold that he did aught of truth betray,
In that the plighting homage he forbore to pay

XXIV.

To Yolande.—For no bond had been pronounced,—
—Between them only gallantries had wooed ;
And only Rumour's gossip had announced
That he with lover's sighs did o'er her brood.

Although perchance at times in serious mood
He looked upon her as a suited spouse ;
—Until the hour when in the May-day Wood,
He saw the fair face beaming through the boughs
Which Heaven had shaped for him,—for whom alone
he vows.

XXV.

Then loudly, fiercely cried Duke Siegerfrid ;—
“ Strange is thy jest,—Sir Knight of Elfenstein !
—Or of thine honour strangely art thou rid !
—From all that thought or reason may divine,
In truth thy brain is now beset with wine,—
And would some full round jest upon us deal !
—But well I trow no other lip than thine,
The burden of thy riddle may unseal :—
I prithee therefore speak,—no more thy tone conceal !”

XXVI.

Beside the Duke the Lady Yolande stood,
Aghast and mute, whilst o’er her pallid face
Reflected shone her father’s burning mood.—
Unmoved, with placid glance did Romont trace
The mingled passions in their fiery chase
O’er features whence their keenest lightning sprang :
And sought he not to flee or to embrace
The martial challenge of the Duke’s harangue,—
But thus, in measured voice, at length his answer
rang:—

XXVII.

“ Sir Duke ! somehow methought I loved thy child,
And shaped my tone with That I seemed to feel !
—Nor was mine honour aught in this defiled,—
Nor did I ever to thy daughter kneel,
Save when my heart was prompted to unseal
A passion which appeared Reality !—
—But later Things of mystery reveal
It was but passing ideality,—
And not the Love which heaven decrees my destiny !

XXVIII.

“ When That the heart believed, by Time is proved
To be the heart’s delusion,—and when Truth
Unfolds that we in truth have never loved ;—
Then it behoves the knightly breast forsooth,
No more to ape affection, but in ruth
Release the blinded heart which in the glow
And swiftly sated credulence of youth,
It has beguiled to heedlessly bestow
A trust which passing years must fatally o’erthrow !

XXIX.

“ But I behold within your wondering eyes,
Impetuously questioned,—‘ Whence the Name
Which I have sung ?—and Who or What replies
To that strange Sound which did my homage claim ?’
—Harken !—and ye shall hear it told !”—The same
Adventures which to Rudenz he renewed,
His swiftly-woven utterances frame,—
And open to the marvelling multitude
The wonders which befell within the May-day wood.

XXX.

Then some with doubt possessed, all speechless stand ;
—With vollied question others seek to know
More than their ears have gathered ;—others brand
The tale as vision, or delusive throe
Of youth’s creating brain ; and mingled flow
Conflicting gesture, disputations loud ;—
Still deeper the contending factions grow,—
Until, each other voice before him bowed,
At length the Duke becomes the speaker of the crowd.

XXXI.

“ Romont of Elfenstein, thy words are dreams !—
Some subtlety of Sleep hath fraught thy brain
With dark asserting fantasy which deems
Full truth and broad reality to reign

Within the shapes which cunning slumbers feign.
 —Awake !—release thy phantom-stridden mind !
 Continue in thy songs the matchless vein
 Of poet-art which doth thy spirit bind,—
 But let it thus no more, a poet's reason blind !”

XXXII.

Then answered Romont :—“ Siegerfrid !—forbear,—
 Nor deem thy counsels may my soul divest
 Of Things which Heaven's Hand hath shadowed
 there !
 —Which have with *Youth Forgotten* fired my
 breast !—
 With Youth which long had ceased to be the guest
 Of my wild heart,—though boyhood yet may lie
 Upon my brow !—I tell thee,—I will wrest
 From out yon forests, *That* which I defy
 Rocks,—waters,—craggs to hold !—or to my soul
 deny !”

XXXIII.

Then cried the Duke :—“ This insult to my child,
 Romont of Elfenstein, thy hand shall rue !
 And be thy perjured scutcheon hence defiled !”
 —With motion darkly swift his blade he drew ;—
 —Pallid the face of knight and vassal grew :—
 From lip to lip the muttered conflict throes !—
 On high, with hollow ring, their falchions flew :—
 —“ Bergenfeld !”—“ Elfenstein !”—“ Bergenfeld !”—
 arose
 The sharp alternate cry,—with thunder-shock they
 close !

XXXIV.

But now from clouds long gathered in the breeze,
 Long in a wide impending darkness hung,—
 Loudly,—as with a roar of rushing seas,
 The Tempest sprang to birth, and broadly rung,
 Crushing the shout of Man with Heaven's tongue !
 And greyly flashed upon the conflict's foam,
 And, like a tocsin in the hollow swung,

Battered with iron sound the trembling dome !
Ere the first foeman's blade had redly stricken home.

XXXV.

Unmoved, they still rush onward,—when, behold !—
All Darkness in a shrunken scroll was furled ;—
—An arch of light through all the heaven rolled,—
Then, downward hissing like a meteor-world,—
Through mist and flood the streaming bolt was hurled !
—Oh, shrank each rim of steel in its blue breath !—
—From every hand the shivering blade is whirled !—
They kneel !—and dare no more to sport with Death,—
So fearful in God's Hand—that Weapon quivereth !—

XXXVI.

But as that throng of minstrel-knights and lords
Marked the clouds riven by the lightning's fang,
—A second flash ran up their silent chords !
And from them wild Unearthly Music rang !—
—Weird Voices through the murmuring columns
sang !
Then passing outward, high in distant tower,
The Sound in chorused echoes seemed to hang !
—A Sound of spirits circling through the hour,
And chanting wild placations to the tempest's power !

XXXVII.

Each lightning which the cloud unburdeneth,
Smites from the songless harps a hollow strain,
Jarring the chords to music with its breath !
—Around the trembling throng,—again ! again !
In whirling measure,—rifting air in twain,—
The chorused Sound rings upward through the
dome !—
—Quickens each heart, and wavers every brain ;—
Some cry to summon Priest and holy tome,—
Some gaze,—some speechless stand,—and some bewil-
dered roam.

XXXVIII.

At length the sounds dispersed, and lulled the storm;
 The broken thunders muttered in retreat.
 —Still motionless was every chieftain's form,
 His lightning-stricken falchion at his feet!
 —Their "Aves" only could the throng repeat,
 No voice would dare to play the speaker's part;
 Until arose from his secluded seat,
 The aged bard, the minstrel Reigenhardt,
 And thus in measured tone addressed each trembling
 heart.—

XXXIX.

"Portentous are the Mysteries this day
 Revealed upon your conflict;—Heaven's Hand
 Hath torn your weapons from you!—and the fray
 Which ye commenced did Heaven's Voice withstand!
 —Forbear,—nor seek to raise the fallen brand,—
 But hold we counsel in the light of Peace,
 How we may hence interpret God's command!—
 —Since now the burdens of my years increase,
 My voice respected oft hath bidden conflict cease.

XL.

"And oft have ye in faction's heat forborne,
 To hear such judgment as my heart could tend.—
 If truly then, in that my brain is worn,
 It may be wise,—oh! cease ye to contend!
 And hear such counsel as my lips may lend.
 —I do behold within this mystery,
 A certain sign portending that the End
 Of all Lord Romont did relate to ye,
 Is something more than Sleep's creating fantasy.

XLI.

"His mien declares he loves the maiden-form
 Which he descried amid yon forest's shade;
 —Ye mocked,—derided,—termed it dreams,—the
 Storm
 His words within *its* majesty arrayed,—

And dashed to earth the yet unsullied blade.
 —Mysterious Songs leapt from our silent chords !
 Now let directing prudence be your aid ;
 With pondered counsel's voice bethink my lords,
 How ye may hence resolve the Sign which Heaven
 accords.

XLII.

“ Renounce thy wrath, oh Sire of Bergenfeld,—
 No more in vain and rabble feud contest ;
 But be ye from all further deeds withheld,
 Till ye have searched yon woods from east to west !
 —Lord Romont,—hath my voice thy will confessed ?”
 Oh, swiftly Romont sprang to his reply,
 Answering,—“ I swear by all the Saints to wrest
 From out yon forests, *That* which I defy
 Rocks,—waters,—craggs to hold,—or to my soul deny !”

XLIII.

With heavy brows, dark Yolande and her Sire
 Forsook their wrath, bewildered and dismayed
 By that stern Song which rang from every lyre,
 And by the tempest which the conflict stayed.
 —By common swift assent, resolve is made
 To issue to the forest and unfold
 The mingled omens in that hour displayed ;
 The Mystery in Romont's numbers told,—
 And shadowed in that Name of wonder “ Rheinègold !”

XLIV.

Then spake Lord Romont to his ready squire :—
 “ Rudenz, call forth my steed,—for I will ride
 Through flood and blast, through tempest and
 through fire,
 To her whom Heaven's omen names my bride !
 —Prepare ye all to follow me beside,—
 But, call no hounds to be your guides this day !
 And don ye naught of hunting-garb ” he cried.
 “ Let each in festal guise pursue the way,—
 To-day—to-day we hunt in nuptial-array !”

XLV.

In scattered throngs disperse the multitude,
From post to post the summoned vassal hies.
No more in clouds of minstrelsy they brood ;
And though they still retain their festal-guise,
From further song or festival arise,
Forth with their lord the forest-league to span,—
To front the darkness of the lowering skies,
And every steep and precipice to scan
From which dark Nature scowls upon intruding man.

XLVI.

Though sombre dew the heaven yet enshrouds,
Though lingering tempests, black with mystery,
Enthroned in silence, threaten from their clouds ;—
Yet some of gentle sex all fearlessly,
Aroused by tender curiosity,
Prepare to issue with the knightly train.—
—All Elfenstein pours forth its chivalry,
And all their severed harmonies regain ;—
Doubt, courtesy, suspense, and wonder mingling reign.

XLVII.

Within the outer court the pavements rattle
Beneath the stamp of hoofs, the beaten stones
Ring like the clash of axe and shield in battle.
Cuffed by the page, the toiling ostler groans ;
On high resound the master-lacquey's tones,
Blent with confusion and the neigh of steeds.
Small mercy find the loitering vassal's bones,—
Shout to command and reprimand succeeds,
Until each squire equipped, his master's charger leads.

XLVIII.

From out the grim portcullis' looming arch,
The mazy throngs of lady, lord and knight,
Assembled with their chieftain, swiftly march ;
The jewelled splendours of their pageant-flight

Glancing all weirdly in the sullen light,—
The deathly radiance of the pallid dews
Which dimly breathe the struggling day to night.—
But as each eye the storm-swept forest views,
Full many a faltering tongue the whispered prayer
renews.

XLIX.

Yet clad in all his gallant revel-guise,
First in the throng, young Elfenstein appears ;
And as they front the dark unyielding skies,
With many a word his followers he cheers.
—But, as from out his horn, to chase their fears,
He blew a merry fanfare rich and loud,
A flood of sun-light, soft with April-tears,
Shot from the bosom of the tempest's shroud,
And bathed his smiling form from out the weeping
cloud !

L.

Oh, fair was Romont !—in his brow of love,
There seemed a mother's presence as he spake !
—But when some mighty thought within him strove,
His glance was battle, and the eagle brake
From all his kindling features to awake
The deeds which from such glances most arise !
So Love and Arms were mingled in his make ;
His brow was flushed with many a victor's prize,—
But greyly lulled with shadow, were his loving eyes !

END OF CANTO III.

CANTO IV.

LORD ROMONT'S CHASE.

I.

NIGHT'S spotless brow now shapes the firmament
 And gazes heaven into purity !
 Whose mighty arch no more by thunders rent,
 Unites in one broad living symmetry,
 The Work and Image of Infinity.—
 —As Space appears an arch to mortal eyes,
 So to our inward eyes Eternity
 Measured by *arching shape* appears to rise,—
 But only in our *gaze* the Arch—the Measure lies.

II.

Night lulls the vale, Night murmurs in the glen,
 Night's solitude is spread upon the grave,
 Night's dreams are woven o'er the eyes of men,
 —As if they fell on dreams, from out their cave
 With muffled roar the distant torrents rave,
 And booming, darkly rock the drowsy land.
 —High from the silver summit of the wave
 Night beckons to the cloud with dreamy hand !
 Night floats upon the lake, Night broods upon the
 strand.

III.

But darkness reigneth not in Nature's glance ;
 —Light is not dead, but only seems to rest,
 Lulled by the Night into a waking trance,
 In purple slumber pillowed on her breast.

—Unbroken is the air from East to West,
Save where around the crag, some sudden wind
Wakens the eagle from her midnight-nest,
Who answers screaming,—in her rock confined,
Deeming the wingèd blast some creature of her kind !

IV.

Flashing and rolling in their savage might,
The gurgling rapids tremble through the glade ;
Their waters roundly globing in the light,
And blueely swollen in the mellow shade.
Then gathered in a tender stream, they wade
Through distant thickets, plains and woodlands vast,
Till buried in a sea of sound, they fade,
Swelling their broken music to the last,
Like some forgotten legend singing through the Past.

V.

But mark ! from yonder hollow's woody browse,
The watch-fire kindles through the riven haze ;
Distorted shadows quiver in the boughs,
Shot from the molten caverns of the blaze.
Here Elfenstein encamped, his search delays,
His path arrested by descending night,
And restlessly abides the morning rays ;
While stretched around in the fantastic light,
His followers and suite repose them from their flight.

VI.

The third hour of the morning drew to end,
And Romont, musing on the mystic Name,
Lay silent, seeking listlessly to blend
His thoughts with the weird dances of the flame ;
When other wandering steps beside him came.
'Twas Siegerfrid, the Duke of Bergenfeld,
All sleepless with the memory of his shame,
Brooding upon the omens undispeled,
Which from his daughter's hand the counted prize
withheld.

VII.

Encountering Romont whilst the others slept,
He thus addressed him : " Lord of Elfenstein,
Strange marvels,—stranger destinies have crept
Between my daughter Yolande's heart and thine.—
—But that we all beheld the sudden sign
Which Heaven or Hell betwixt us interposed,—
(Heaven I trust ;)—our wronged and ancient line
Upon no bloodless battle had reposed,—
Our vengeance or my death the contest should have
closed !"

VIII.

" Sir Duke, it would have been no knightly deed,"
Retorted Romont, " to have mimicked love,
When Truth no longer might with Passion plead ;
No more then with my heart I falsely strove,
But spake the things I felt, nor sought to move
Thy child with homage foul to knightly fame.
—All things the laws of Chivalry bebove,
All that requital may in reason claim,
Unshrinking, I performed, nor worked ye wrong or
shame."

IX.

" Most courteous, by Heaven !" the Duke replied,
" But,—if thou find this Wanderer of the glade,
How knowest thou if ye may be allied ?—
If she be phantom,—witch, or Elfin-maid ?
Or cunning fiend which in thy path hath strayed ?
—Oh, fantasies possess thee !—Boy, beware,
Lest thou by subtle demons art betrayed !
Impetuous,—unheeding,—without care
Of what strange essence prove thy mystic woodland
fair !"

X.

" I am not mad, though many deem me so ;"
Responded Romont ;—" Sire of Bergenfeld,
Things, *thou* wouldst ever vainly seek to know,
Have all such terror from my soul dispelled !

—It was no demon which mine eyes beheld,—
This—this I know !—and much—much more beside.
But that such thought and speech as thine be quelled ;
—She must confront the Cross to be a bride,—
And That she will not fear !—so, be the Church our
guide.”

XI.

Now high amid these forests, far beyond
The paths of hunters, rose a distant lake,
Remotely bosomed in a rocky bond
Of circling mountains.—Seldom did there break
Upon its shore those echoes which awake
Countries the chase hath traversed ; for, to gain
Its wild recess, the hunter would forsake
The less opposing region of the plain,
To clamber rugged steeps, with toilings long and vain.

XII.

Around its shore a dreamy fold of dew
For ever lingered ; but when noontide-rays
Shot through the flood, and lit its virgin hue,
Reflected in the broad expanded blaze,
All heaven opening, seemed to fill the gaze :
Whilst liquid with blue languor fell the wave,
Voluptuously folded in the haze ;
And rising from the water-shrouded cave,
A placid lull of sound to all the echos gave.

XIII.

So ceaseless was the murmur and the flow
Which from its bosom through the ether rose ;
’Twas called the Lake of Sighs ;—for in the glow
Of noon, or in the evening’s purple close,
Or when the glance of midnight doth repose
Upon the wave,—for ever upward wound,
A ceaseless Sigh through all the ether grows,
Filling the languid dews with gliding sound,
Through all the nodding ferns which drooping bend
around.

XIV.

Some few stray fishers dwelt upon the strand,
Who ne'er by night would venture on the tide ;
For when the Moon did o'er that Lake expand,
A mystic sleep would o'er the senses glide
Of him who dared upon the wave to ride ;
And in that Sleep, Tradition's record told,
The slumberer a Hidden World descried,
A Dream-world which before his gaze unrolled,
With Things which it were well no mortal should
behold.

XV.

The lake was vast ; and common faith believed
An Unseen Isle within its centre lay,—
A land invisible and unperceived
Save by the eyes of him who thus should stray
In that wild slumber 'neath the midnight-ray.
To him it was revealed, and on its shore,
Strange things befell him ere the dawn of day !
—Perchance he would return to earth no more ;—
And so by night the fisher closed his cabin-door.

XVI.

No memory could relate of one who dared
Such venture, only superstition deemed
It must be Evil which the roamer fared ;
For none among the vulgar ever dreamed
It might be Good ; and more, the Church had seemed
To long forbid such curiosity ;
And when the noontide o'er the waters beamed,
Amid them rose a tuneful rhapsody,
So wild, it seemed in truth the Lurley's minstrelsy.

XVII.

At least the drowsy fisher held it such ;
And as the eddies sparkled to his sight,
The waves, as they passed onward, seemed to touch
Innumerable harp-strings in their flight,—

Shedding their music through the mazy light ;
Whilst that great Sigh of Sound through all the lake
Was ever stirring, which in deepest night
Full oft the sleeping fisher would awake,
Or with a dying murmur through his slumbers break.

XVIII.

Now oft young Romont in a dreamy mood,
Upon these waves would wander forth alone ;
Here, wafted in his skiff, he loved to brood,
To float half-waking o'er the current's moan,
And list the sounds which Rumour deemed the tone
Of water-spirits in their cavern-world.—
Upon the glancing waters freshly blown,
Here, as he marked the foaming eddies curled,
Full many a maze of thought around his spirit whirled.

XIX.

Now as the twilight gathered, he arose ;
Gave order when his followers should wake,
They should abide his coming in repose ;
And, calling Rudenz only to partake
His wand'ring, softly issued through the brake,
Sped forth beneath the dusky matin-skies,
Hastened each trodden region to forsake,
And clambered many a rugged mountain-rise,
Until at length he stood before the Lake of Sighs.

XX.

A soft sweet dew lay o'er the twilight scene ;
Night with her last farewell seemed clinging there,
Filling with her grey tears the broad serene.
—In every sob the broken wavelets bare,
Or wafted from the distant torrent's lair,
It seemed as if some Song, some Melody
Long sung,—now lay forgotten in the air,—
And Nature in her wandering rhapsody
Were striving to recall its tones to memory !

XXI.

For all the storms which rent the previous day,
Had warmly parted on the southern wind,
And faded in the bosom of the May.
—Now led by some strange instinct undefined,
Which rose within his wild contending mind,
Had Romont left his followers to wreak
His restless mood in action ;—and with blind
Confused intent, he bade young Rudenz seek
His bark which lay concealed within a neighbouring
creek.

XXII.

In some brief space returned the trusty squire,
Guiding the skiff along the twilight-wave ;
And at the signal of his lord's desire,
Drew into land beneath a moss-grown cave.
Then Romont thus addressed him, as he gave
The rudder to his hands :—" Remain thou here,—
Awaiting my return,—no human save
Myself, may follow where my bark shall steer ;—
Here watch, till o'er the tide my skiff shall re-appear."

XXIII.

In wonder Rudenz harkened, but obeyed ;
Beheld afar the dim receding bark,
Till mingled with the waters' drowsy shade,
He could no more its hazy course remark.
—Some time in silence sped :—then o'er the dark
And shifting surface, brooding seemed to glide,—
Blent with the music of the roused lark,
And many a waking voice of matin-tide,
The murmur of a horn from out the mountain-side.

XXIV.

Still marvelling of that which should befall ;
All motionless, the youth addressed his ear ;—
And o'er the waters, like a Spirit's call,
Again, in mellow murmurs floated near,

Arose the sound, with accent wildly clear !
—Deep in the shadow of the moss-grown cave,
The squire lay hushed in mingled doubt and fear,
Struggling his wildered terrors to enslave ;—
But hence to follow Romont o'er the twilight-wave.

XXV.

Still guided by some luring fantasy,—
In part to soothe the conflict of his thought,
He steered upon his path of mystery.
—But every circling breeze around him brought
Some hidden Hope,—and every wind was fraught
With nameless tidings ; onward as he sped
Through distant regions of the lake, where naught
The rumour-sated fisher ever led
To trust the tide whereon Tradition pictured Dread.

XXVI.

But as, all undismayed by myth or spell,
He rode amid the purple dews of dawn ;
Anon his musing gaze in wandering, fell
Upon a distant bay and sloping lawn,
All beamy with the golden tears of morn.
Within its hollows hidden, seemed to lie
Such beckoning mystery, he raised his horn,
And with a flow of sylvan melody,
Blew all its echos upward through the misty sky.

XXVII.

But scarcely had his warm breath shaped the tone,
When, as it murmured on the distant shore,
An answering Song above the current's moan,
Sung by an answering Voice, the breezes bore !
—In wonder and in ecstasy, once more
He blew the mellow greeting o'er the tide,—
And once again responding accents soar !—
—Swiftly the sail he set,—the oar he plied,
Nor paused until he drew that sloping shore beside.

XXVIII.

Fast to a jutting ledge his skiff he bound ;
Then leaped upon the strand, and undismayed,
Advanced upon the wild untrodden ground.
High upward o'er a woody steep he strayed ;
And suddenly beneath a clustered shade,
Reclining 'mid the dewy ferns, beheld
The mystic figure of the Wandering-Maid !
—Around her mazy streams their passage held ;—
He listed!—thus her song the rushing water quelled.

I.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;
But vainly the songs of the woodland shall call,
Unheeded they die on thy grey castle-wall !
—In sleep, and in Silence within the far glade
I beheld thy dear Face, as I sorrowing strayed :—

II.

Oh, wild were the Songs of the Forest my Love,
As I watched thee in slumber within the May-grove !
But darkly thy battlements frown on the day,
—The Face I beheld as it slumbering lay,—
Is shrouded and lost in the grey castle-wall,—
Oh, vainly the notes of the woodland shall call !

III.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;
Oh, vainly the smiles of the Summer shall fall,
Thy dear Smile is lost in the grey castle-wall !
Thy warm Smile is hidden within the cold stone,—
I must weep—I must Smile through the Summer alone !

IV.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;
—Oh, vainly the voice of the woodland shall call,
Thy dear Voice is lost in the grey castle-wall,—
Thy dear Voice is hidden within the cold stone,—
I must wander and sing through the forest alone !

V.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love ;
 —Vainly, oh vainly in glory above
 The glance of the heaven is cast upon all,
 Thy dear Glance is lost in the grey castle-wall,—
 Thy dear Gaze is hidden within the cold stone,—
 Its glances are darkness,—and I am alone !

VI.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
 But grimly thy battlements shadow the grove !
 —At the foot of the stones of thy grey castle-wall
 Endlessly, weirdly the waters entwine,—
 Oh, when shall my spirit be mingled with thine ?

XXIX.

She ceased ;—by copse and clustered thickets veiled,
 Romont unseen, each tone of wonder caught !
 Trembling he marked, as now her accents failed,
 Within her eyes the tears her silence wrought,
 As if her brain conceived some sudden thought
 Which only could in tears the strain prolong !
 —Till suddenly, upon his lips unsought,
 The yearning of his soul brake forth in song,
 And thus his answering music thrilled the streams
 among :—

“ Though fortress and rampart encompass me Love,
 With thee and the Songs of the Forest I rove !—
 Though battlements hide me, thou art not alone,—
 No rampart shall sever thy bosom from mine !
 —Through battlement, turret, through rampart and stone,
 My spirit is free and is mingled with thine !”

XXX.

Grasping the heather with her quivering hands,
 Stricken and pale, and motionless she lies !—
 But now upon the sword beside her stands
 A form she dare not greet !—within her rise
 The memories of the Maiden’s prophecies.—
 “ There shalt thou turn and seek with man to dwell !”
 —Through all the Past with maddened thought she
 flies !—
 From page to page,—her Destiny,—the Spell,—
 And every word which from the prophet-maiden fell !

XXXI.

Till suddenly upon her shoulder laid,
A living Touch that Book of Terror seals !—
Beneath *It* through the Past all memories fade ;
No sense save that of Touch her brain reveals,—
She hears,—sees,—utters naught,—but only *feels* !
Within that Touch her whole perception lies
In one concentrated life !—upon her steals
One Faculty in which all other dies !—
Nor longer can the Past within her bosom rise.

XXXII.

Still as if *all* she *dared* of him to know,
Was told her by his touch, she bent her head !
—But felt another heart within her grow,
Its seed by that warm hand within her shed !
—And then swift-following thoughts around her
fled ;—
She thought upon the Words which she had sung,
Upon the Things which he therein had read,—
Upon the Answer which around her rung,—
Then half in shame once more her drooping visage
hung.

XXXIII.

At length she trembling turned,—and trembling bore
Her eyes to his,—but then no more she strove !
Oh, when her shrinking glance had wandered o'er
His form, no more could Doubt her spirit move ;—
For fair was Romont, in his brow of love
There seemed a mother's presence as he gazed !
—No more she feared,—no more she sought to prove,
But unto him her glance of wonder raised,
Whilst the red dawn of May through all the heather
blazed.

XXXIV.

Oh, through the waking forests that fair brow
Came as the dawn upon her, and the Day
Seemed never to have broken until now !
—Then her white hand upon his breast he lay,

And thus beneath that opening morn of May,
 Awoke his voice within her wondering ear ;
 " Fair-mystic Wanderer,—phantom,—gipsy,—fay,—
 Whate'er thou art or canst be,—thou art dear !
 For as thy spirit gazes through that living tear,

XXXV.

" Thou'rt *pure* as its wild light,—this—this I know !
 And read that Heaven shaped thee for mine own !
 —But speak, and tell me whence thou art,—although
 That thou art pure, and sorrowful and lone,
 For me and for my love, enough were known ;
 —Yet be thy mystery to me confessed,
 To silence Things which Rumour's tongue hath sown !"
 —" Oh, I am weary,—thou canst give me rest !" —
 She answered, and in silence, hung upon his breast.

XXXVI.

" Rest shall be thine,—poor stricken bird !" he cried,
 " If I within the desert make my nest !
 —But, tell me whence thou art ?—I, chance my guide,
 Roaming one noon in solitary quest
 Of wherewithal to fill a vacant breast,
 Beheld thee musing by a brooklet's wave ;—
 But ere my voice my presence had confessed,
 Thy form had vanished,—naught remaining save
 Thy Name—which mystic winds unto my spirit gave !

XXXVII.

" But thou ere this, in Dreams,—Perception—
 Thought,
 In all my inward life wert known to me !
 —Thy tears,—thy touch, thy lonely song hath taught
 All I would know or can know !—Destiny
 Hath circled thee with some strange mystery ;—
 Whate'er it prove I little reck or heed,—
 But hence dear Rheingold, thou shalt follow me,
 Where others will demand what nameless deed
 Thus drove thee forth, thy wild and roving course to
 lead ?

XXXVIII.

"No gipsy-mother e'er begat thy smile,—
Too pure thy brow for one of Egypt's race,
Too deep thine eyes for shallow gipsy-guile !
—The tender blush that northern summers trace,
Hath filled with Northern day-light thy fair face !
—Oh, I would know no more than I behold,
And with my kiss thy tears to laughter chase !
But thou shalt be my bride,—no more withhold
That which to other ears we must with time unfold."

XXXIX.

"Never," she cried, "oh, never can it be !—
My Destiny—my Path is set for ever !
—Oh, leave me, through the woodlands yet to flee ;
I have beheld thee—loved thee !—seek no further !
One boon alone I crave ere forth I wander,
Thy name—thy name unto mine ear confess,—
Leave me with It, the mountains and the heather !—
—Only thy Name—thy Name I would possess,—
Thy Name—then welcome Woods ! and Winds, and
Wilderness !"—

XL.

"Romont," he answered, "Lord of Elfenstein,
Behold the name which shall be thine,—for naught
Shall tear thee hence,—the Future holds thee mine,
Whate'er the Present or the Past hath wrought !"
—"Romont,"—she murmured,— "Romont—thou
hast taught
A Language to my solitude,—farewell !"—
She wildly strove to rise, but vainly sought
To struggle from his hold,—no speech could quell,
Or Fate, or Curse the bond of their two hearts dispel.

XLI.

"Whate'er thou art," he cried, "whence'er thou art,—
By heaven thou art mine !—oh, Rheingold ! stay,—
We love and love in purity,—impart,—
Disclose whate'er thou wilt,—thou canst display

No mystery—no curse with power to slay
 The Life which lives in us !—no more of flight !
 —As soon would God take back the New-born Day
 From the expectant world, as in that light
 Take back the new-born World which opens to our
 sight !”

XLII.

“Romont”—she ceased, for as upon her tongue
 That Sound first rose, its music in her ear
 So wildly and melodiously rung,
 She paused in silence,—stricken as with fear
 Of melody so *sudden* and so *near* !
 —And yet she paused, with gaze of rhapsody,
 As if she did an inward music hear
 Far-fading through the aisles of Memory !—
 And then she spake, in voice of saddening mystery ;—

XLIII.

“Romont ! now harken what I tell to thee !—
 When I have spoken,—shalt thou understand
 Thy love,—thy trust could ne’er repose in me !
 —Things hidden,—which I may not name,—com-
 mand
 That I to threat, entreaty, or demand,
 Shall never more than *one* brief answer yield,—
 —‘I am a Wanderer from a distant land !’—
 Behold,—’tis all which e’er may be revealed,—
 To me it were destruction, if I more unsealed !”

XLIV.

“So be it, then !” he answered ; “by the Mass
 My thoughts and deeds are subject unto none,
 And save mine own no other judgment pass !
 —Why should I reckon the murmurs that may run
 From lip to lip,—let those who fear thee shun
 Our converse ;—I am free, and thou my bride !
 Within these lands my will and law are one !
 And let no fears—no doubts thy heart divide,
 For, hear me !—Heaven’s token hath our souls allied !”

XLV.

With rapid speech and gesture he relates
The history of Yolande and her Sire;
Their cunning intrigue,—the unfriendly fates
Which bade the destined union expire;—
—The daughter's rage,—the thwarted father's ire,—
The scene which followed in the Hall of Song,
—The Mysteries which bade the feud retire,—
The hushed bewildered terrors of the throng,
—At length the search they held the summer-woods
among.

XLVI.

"Great Heaven!" she cried, "thy guiding power I
crave,
—Oh, after all which *has* been,—can *this* be?
—Oh, thou art strong,—and beautiful,—and brave,—
Can this,—can *all thou* art,—be loved by *me*?
Speak—shall I live,—behold all things with thee?
Feel,—know,—hear,—answer everything which thou
Canst feel or tell?—'tis false,—hence,—I will flee!"
—She paused, then cried, beholding his fair brow,
"Oh God! the day has never broken until now!"

XLVII.

Then suddenly her voice, her gesture ceased,—
Senseless and cold in his warm arms she lay.
—Swiftly he rose, for broadly shone the East,—
And bore her forth beneath the opening day,—
Gaining the purple border of the bay.
—Soon pillowed in his anchored bark she lies;
Flashes his oar amid the circling spray,
And wildly o'er the parted wave he hies,
His sleeping burden rocked upon the Lake of Sighs.

XLVIII.

Within the camp, throughout the rising dawn,
His followers have watched their chief's return.
But though the shades have kindled into morn,
No tidings greet their gathering concern;

And nothing may their eager questions learn,
Save the command which bade them here await
Lord Romont's coming ; and though many burn
To issue forth, their fears to satiate,
None dare transgress his word, though trembling for
his fate.

XLIX.

Duke Siegerfrid beside the smouldering fire,
Sat brooding on the wrongs of Bergenfeld ;
Whilst knight and page, and follower and squire
Dispersed in many groups, their converse held.
When suddenly each busy voice was quelled,—
For Rudenz, panting, burst upon the scene,—
—“Sound on your horns ! and be no voice withheld !”
He cried, with flushed and wild exulting mien,—
“Salute my lord !—he comes,—and bears his forest-
queen !”

L.

Then all expectant rise with mute accord,
Whilst merry tones the drowsy echos scare ;
And soon around him on the dewy sward,
All eyes are turned upon his captured fair—
Upon the Maid whose tresses seem to bear,
The winds in sleep upon them as they wave,
And with their folds of motion rock the air
To slumber ;—and the drooping breeze enslave,
As if their touch could bid the storms no longer rave !

LI.

Her gaze is fixed on Romont's form, and seems
To shrink from every other form or face !
Densely the marvelling throng around her streams ;
Her care-worn features some with wonder trace,—
Her garb fantastic in its woodland grace.
Some join in whispered converse, some apart,
Abstracted, bend a vacant eye on space ;
And others with bewildered questions dart
From group to group, but none can aught of sooth
impart.

LII.

At length approached the Duke of Bergenfeld,
With many-mingled musings in his glance ;
Speechless awhile the maiden's form beheld,
As if arisen from a broken trance ;
Then spake to Romont,—“ Sirrah, if perchance
I now may lend the counsel of my years,
I sternly would entreat thee to advance
No further in thy purpose, till our ears
Be lightened with such matter as may calm our fears.

LIII.

“ Rheingold, thou hast declared thy wanderer's
name ;—
—Save with the mystic Treasure of the Rhine,
With which no holy thing may consort claim,
With naught may we associate it ; thine
Be now the task, Sir Knight of Elfenstein,
To open to our ears this mystery,—
Interpret that no reason may divine ;—
Make known to us thy wanderer's history,—
If it be holy,—welcome,—bride and revelry !”

LIV.

“ Then hear me, Duke of Bergenfeld,” he cried,
“ Upon no voice or counsel do I wait,
Saving mine own, in choosing forth my bride !
—A mystic vow forbids her to relate
Whate'er amid the Past hath been her fate !
—Of nothing pure or holy hath she dread,—
Let this your doubts,—your scruples satiate !—
—The tokens ye beheld were hallowèd,
And from no source,—no power, save that of Heaven
sped !

LV.

“ Look to thy speech Sir Duke !—for by the Rood,
And by the heaven which revealed that token,
This hour my heart and hand are well in mood,
To measure swords for that which thou hast spoken !

If such debate hereafter be awoken,
 Let him who questions answer with his brand,
 For something more than lances shall be broken !¹
 —Who doubts her doubteth us ;—henceforth I stand
 Her home within my heart,—her honour in my hand !”

LVI.

Then Siegerfrid scarce answered, for he saw
 No present gain were his in hostile word,
 And deemed it better wisdom to withdraw
 Into his cunning thoughts.—Long whispers stirred
 (As Romont's last defiant speech was heard,) Amid the throng ; but whilst they strangely held
 The purpose and the tidings thus averred,
 They felt, although their doubts were scarce dispelled,
 That none could love their lord as she whom they
 beheld.

LVII.

For as her garments by the breezes blown,
 Around him in fantastic circles wind,—
 So timidly and lightly o'er him thrown,
 Her white and tender arms his bosom bind,—
 With touch so loving, helpless and resigned,—
 Her whole wild form around him seems to cling
 Like blossoms strown upon a May-day wind,—
 Enshrouding him in flowers,—encompassing
 His blushing figure with a white-blown cloud of Spring !

LVIII.

From lip to lip conflicting questions borne,—
 Prompted by glad although bewildered thought ;
 (Save where the crest of Bergenfeld is worn,
 Where speech is oft with angry gesture fraught ;)
 Vassal and knight once more assembled, sought
 Their homeward course ; the Maid in triumph led
 Upon a young white steed, whose trappings wrought
 With leafy garlands, rustling to his tread,
 Around her as she rode, a woodland odour shed.

¹ For lances to be broken was often merely the result of a friendly combat.

LIX.

Upon the morrow, through the listening land,
With trumpet tone, proclaiming heralds read
That Elfenstein bestowed his heart and hand
On Her whose story speedy Rumour spread
Throughout the Vale of Inn.—Then warmly sped
The generous time. Whole nights beneath his towers,
His halls were giddy with the dancers' tread ;—
Morn led the chase amid the forest bowers,—
And still hunt, banquet, pageant, thrilled the summer-
hours.

LX.

But oft apart from feast and minstrels' tone,
Shunning all song save that of their two souls,—
Romont and Rheingold hied them forth alone
To where the Lake of Sighs its murmur rolls.
Here would they flee from out the stern controls
Of others' presence, in their own to dwell.
—Here musing 'mid the ferns and reedy-shoals
Which gemmed the haunted wave, in fancy's spell
They heard the Naiad chanting from her lichen-cell,

LXI.

Her numbers thrown along the jetting spray ;—
At least they deemed it such, for lover's ear
Is full of sounds which people night and day.
—And oft if sudden tempest did appear,
Safe in the fisher's cot they loved to hear
The legends ever new upon his tongue ;—
Then, issuing, their homeward course to steer,
Heard them by every wind and wavelet stung,
And from each woodland voice some new tradition
wrung.

LXII.

It was a day, when that enchanted tide
Lay murmuring in the dark blue heat of noon ;
Romont and Rheingold o'er the waters hied,
Their white sail glimmering in the warm lagoon,

And swelling with the generous winds of June.
 Swiftly they steered for that secluded bay
 Where first they mingled heart with heart, and soon
 Around their bark, the current's foamy play
 Shot with a cold fresh sound, like pebbles crushed in
 spray.

LXIII.

With blended gaze of wonder and of love,
 Beside him in the shallop she reclined,
 Whilst Ecstasy and Fear bewildered strove !
 —For as they blew before the summer wind,
 Drunken with Light and Air, all things combined
 In one conflicting Freedom !—Ceaselessly
 Rocks, mountains, skies expanded,—till her mind
 Aching with Rapture's broad intensity,—
 Numbed with beholding, felt—to long for secrecy !

LXIV.

All Nature reeled before her wildered sight,
 And as she drank the fulness of the day,
 Around, the giddy waters swam with light ;—
 —Existence floated past her as she lay !
 Her life blown onward as the drifted spray,
 Foaming with lustre,—shattered by the gale
 Which gave it birth !—Upon her seems to weigh
 A Freedom which the firmament doth fail
 To measure with its Arch—e'en heaven seems to pale,

LXV.

And pass into a common thing of shape,
 Before that *Thing* all shapeless and untold !
 One mighty Void within her seemed to gape
 For utterance,—till o'er her cheek there rolled
 Long tears,—for Things no heaven or earth can
 hold,
 Or Sound, or Shape embody, though the whole
 Unite in one vast power,—Tears can unfold !
 And Touch,—that Master-Language of the Soul—
 Can grasp a World, where Speech lies withered in con-
 trol.

LXVI.

So subtle is its hidden Voice—and such
Deep music can its inward breathings make !
—She wept,—she touched him, and within that touch
The mighty Silence of her spirit spake ?—
And bade that yearning Void in language break !
—Then as their answering souls in consort sang,
Each felt a thousand inward echos wake,—
Some from the Past with mystic murmurs sprang,
Through the dark vault of Future—others dimly rang !

LXVI.

But suddenly the fisher's barcarolle
Heard o'er the mellowing wave, her ear doth seize,
And wildly fills the measure of her soul.—
—His naked limbs extended to the breeze,
His heart in song a careless burden frees.
—With tawny curls, red-cap and sun-brown eyes—
Rocked in a floating luxury of ease
Upon the bosom of the Lake of Sighs,
Thus sang the Fisher, drowsing 'neath the noon-day
skies.

BARCAROLLE.

I.

The Lurley slumbers beneath the tide ;—
Living and pure as her spotless breast,
Upon her bosom the waters rest ;
Over her slumbers my bark shall glide.
Rocked by the rise and the fall of her breast,
As she sleeps in that mystic rest,
I and my song o'er the waters ride.

II.

The Lurley dances beneath the tide ;—
Living and wild as her mazy motion,
Flashes the river's glittering ocean ;
Over her dances my bark shall glide.
Rocked by the rise and the fall of her motion,
As it wavers the river's ocean,
I and my song o'er the waters ride.

III.

As in the summer I wandering hied
 Forth with my song o'er the waters wide,
 Young Luischen I espied,
 Blushing from the mountain-side !
 The Lurley chanted beneath the tide,—
 The Lurley sang in the noonday sun,
 And her music wove our hearts in one !

IV.

Living and wild as the melody,
 Was the glance Luischen cast on me !
 Over her music our bark shall glide.
 Rocked by the rise and the fall of her numbers,
 As they waver the river's slumbers,
 I and my song and Luischen ride !

LXVIII.

Lulled by the murmur of the fisher's tone,
 Onward they glided, till before them rose
 The bay whose shore beheld him first her own.
 —Soon as the widening rocks the scene disclose,
 Full swiftly to the jutting strand he throws
 The anchoring cable.—From the bark they rise,
 Ascend the steep, nor on their path repose,
 Until the heathery dell before them lies,
 Where she first knew his touch and his grey loving
 eyes.

LXIX.

Now in vicinity to Romont's halls,
 Beyond some intervening forest-land,
 The Abbey of St. Killian's stately walls
 With many a fane and circling aisle expand,
 And many a fertile vale its lords command :
 With benediction crown the fertile soil,
 And tithe the produce of the peasant's hand :
 For well in Romont's land the sons of toil
 Pursue their prosperous days, nor fear marauder's
 spoil.

LXX.

Vast was the Abbey, and of ancient date,
And richly in its aisles of gothic stone
Accumulated strength of ages sate.
—'Twixt this and Romont's house, from time unknown,
An ancient law had from tradition grown.
Whene'er a son of Elfenstein did wed,
Within this Abbey-church, and here alone,
His bridal-hymn was sung, his trothal read,
And here the priestly hand its nuptial blessing shed.

LXXI.

'Twas said, though dimly known, some ancient deeds
Gave birth unto the custom ;—none could tell
Of time when any lord of those fair meads,
Since first to feudal governance they fell,
Had sought the olden usage to dispel,
Or unto other altars led his bride :
Hence all conceived that Romont's marriage-bell
Should ring from Killian's towers ; and o'er the tide
'Twas known to Rheingold as she rode her lord beside.

LXXII.

Amid the ferns and moss they musing lay,
In the dark hollow of a thicket shade ;
Whilst brownly clustered in the summer-ray,
The bees around them through that mellow glade,
A warm and richly-floating music made,
Until their bower seemed dark with melody.
But there was that in Rheingold's eyes betrayed
Somewhat at discord with their rhapsody,
Mingling in every gaze Joy, Fear and Mystery.

LXXIII.

Till Romont marking many things untold
Beneath her silence, spake thus tenderly :—
“ In mystery and dreams, dear Rheinègold,
Our love began,—in dreams and mystery

Let it continue ;—but their lies in thee—
Oh, something more than ever can be well
Thou shouldst conceal ;—but if thou hold from me
That which thy vows forbid thee, love, to tell,
Be thou not silent,—though—thy fate in secret dwell.—

LXXIV.

“ Let somewhat I can answer be confessed,—
—But say thou’rt weary,—though untold thy fears,
Then I can bid thee sleep upon my breast,—
Or only weep,—then I can dry thy tears,—
Or smile, and I will smile !”—His voice she hears
Still hushed, but though she listens speechlessly,
Oh, how his young warm touch her spirit cheers !
Between them language flowed all silently
As through his locks her fingers wandered tremblingly.

LXXV.

And as her hand amidst his tresses passed,
To her it seemed, as there they sought repose
As if her fingers o’er a lute were cast,
Beneath them such wild harmonies arose ;
Still deeper ’neath her touch that music grows,
Some while no further utterance replies.
—With frenzied gesture suddenly she throws
Her clinging arms around him, lifts her eyes,
And thus with troubled speech and yearning accent
cries :—

LXXVI.

“ Oh, Romont !—say that nothing e’er shall part
Our souls,—or ever teach thee to despise
And cast from thee my sorrow-beaten heart !
Oh, look not on me with bewildered eyes,
Nor deem my words from sudden frenzy rise !
A Fate forbids me even unto thee
To open that which in my memory lies,—
And canst thou yet believe and trust in me,—
Nor doubt whate’er betide, my truth—my purity ?”

LXXVII.

"Did every voice," he cried, "did every tongue
Of Past and Future join to brand thy name,—
—Oh, were there proof from thousand records wrung,
To tear thee from me and pollute thy fame,—
Did any who beyond my scorn might claim,
Declare it, I would answer with my glaive :—
No voice of Heaven could pronounce thy shame,
—There is no voice of Hell I would not brave
Whilst Honour and thy Love around my scutcheon
clave !"

LXXVIII.

"And wilt thou ever think and answer thus?—
—Oh, Romont hear me !—when they make me
thine,—
There is an ancient law commandeth us,—
A custom held by all thy father's line,—
To only wed before St. Killian's shrine.—
—Oh, thou wilt doubt me when this thing is told,—
No longer as thou art, wilt thou be mine,—
—For reasons which I ever must withhold,—
Things which my hidden Fate forbids me to unfold,—

LXXIX.

"I pray thee,—I entreat thee that our troth
Be not pronounced beneath St. Killian's fane,
But that our union and our plighting oath
Be uttered on the day our nuptials reign,
Within the church thy castle-walls contain ;
—That there our marriage-litany be read,—
That we that day and all our bridal-train
Pass not without thy gates !—Oh, I have said !—
—Speak Romont—speak !—thy faith—thy trust in me
has fled !"

LXXX.

An instant some bewilderment controls
Young Romont's spirit, but Suspicion strove
In vain to cast her thrall between their souls.
"Though strange thy words," he cried, "I fear not
love,

—My trust in thee no mystery shall move,—
 Since thee I love,—all other things I dare !—
 —Whilst heaven's arch shall wear the form above,
 Thy pure brow wears before me,—I may care
 But little what dark shape our mystic fortunes wear !

LXXX'.

“ So be it as thou wilt, no law so old,
 But that my word its limit can assign ;—
 Our bridal shall be sung,—our nuptials told
 Within our walls,—before the private shrine.—
 —Let all who further reason would divine,—
 Than my command for this decision, hear
 One answer, 'twas thy will and hence is mine !
 —Would all thy fate before me might appear,
 And that no vow forbade thy secrets to mine ear !”

LXXXII.

“ Oh, Romont, would that all were known to thee !”
 She wildly answered, “ or that I alone
 Amidst untrodden forests yet did flee,—
 I and my passions to the tempest strown,
 Things only unto storms and deserts known !”
 —“ Oh, cease,” he cried, “ whate'er thy destiny,
 I care not so thy fortunes are mine own !
 —So be thy Past forbidden unto me,—
 I only love thee more for thy sweet mystery !”

LXXXIII.

Her cheek was pale with many a tempest-blast,
 Her bright locks torn, by rugged winds caressed,
 Around her weather-beaten temples cast.
 —Where storms had wounded his warm lips were
 pressed,
 And like a storm-blown flower upon his breast,
 She clinging lay in slumber's wild release.
 —“ My bosom be thy home,—here take thy rest,”
 He murmured, “ in this home thy wanderings cease ;—
 Rest, love,—and slumber bind thy golden brow with
 peace !”

LXXXIV.

And so the hours unnumbered o'er them fled,
Till vesper-shadows stole the Lake around,
Whilst those long endless sighs its waters shed,
Seemed threading ether with a haze of Sound !
Till as the ceaseless tones the ear surround,
All thoughts and objects of the spirit's view
Reflected seem,—as in a mirage wound,—
As shadows lengthened through a floating dew !
¹ One long wild swoon of sound all things in measure
drew.

LXXXV.

Each waving branch the maiden's spirit swayed !
And as she felt his brow her kiss receive,
Above them rose the vesper-wind and laid
Its soft hand on the bosom of the Eve,
Which seemed beneath the touch to gently heave
And rock them with its motion on their bed
Of drowsy lawn.—The wood-doves lowly weave
Their tones, and as the spray from fountains shed,
The thinly-silvered willows through the twilight spread.

END OF CANTO IV.

¹ The nature of a mirage is known to most readers. It is that phenomenon by which objects reflected in mist, are presented palpably to the eye, and especially occurs in deserts, where travellers have been led to believe a city lay before them, through this peculiar delusion. It is hardly such a mirage however, to which I refer in the above stanza, but the more common species frequently occurring amongst the dews of mountainous regions. The image which I would portray is this:—The thoughts and objects of the mind appearing through a "haze of sound," as shadows dimly seen in the dews of a mirage.

VII.

Thus spake the Duke whilst musing in his skiff,
In voice so dark with thunder-tone of gloom,—
So deep-drawn from the chest,—it seemed as if
He would himself within himself entomb,
And make his sounding chest his catacomb.
—But Lady Yolande cried,—“Hast nothing heard
Of things late uttered? Things which point the doom
Of this preparing bridal,—if thou gird
Thy schemes with prudence, and be swift in deed and
word?”

VIII.

“From sudden cause most secret and unspoken,
Lord Romont’s madness hath with deed insane,
The ancient custom of his fathers broken,
Which bids him wed beneath St. Killian’s fane!
—Announced is this decree, his bridal-train
Shall issue not from out his castle-hold;—
Within his walls the nuptial shall reign,—
—Within the private chapel shall be told
The Masses which unite his troth with Rheinègold.”

IX.

Now Hermann, Bishop of St. Killian’s shrine,
To Yolande’s kindred was related, and
Had aided Siegerfrid in his design.
—With every counsel which he could command,
He foremost of the Clergy did withstand
The present union, and longed to trace
Some mystery which should again demand
The eye of Holy Church, and might efface
The mandate whose accord allowed the nuptial grace.

X.

So eagerly Duke Siegerfrid received
The sudden tidings which his daughter bore,
And hurriedly his ready brain conceived
A plot which might their drooping cause restore.

—Strangely his features kindled, but no more
 His heavy glance bespoke despondency.
 He rose, and lightly sprang upon the shore,
 Then answering Yolande's hushed expectancy,
 Thus spake, beholding her with new complacency :—

XI.

“Thy holy kinsman of St. Killian, child,
 Was little pleased when tidings reached his ear
 Of that in which our honour was defiled.
 —Most strangely in his eyes all things appear ;
 —Thy kindred and thy cause to him are dear ;—
 He struggles yet to rouse the Church's ire,
 So when he shall this new decretal hear,
 Which bids St. Killian's ancient law expire,—
 Perchance in our just cause some fate may yet con-
 spire !”

* * * *

XII.

It was the hour of early summer-dawn.
 —Reflected upon stream and woody rise,
 Kindling the dews of fountain, moss and lawn,
 A cold grey beauty lit the waking skies,
 Sweet as the gladness of an old man's eyes !
 —Filling the earth with pale serenity.—
 Thus did the morn of nuptial arise,
 And moved along the mountains silently,
 The Vale of Inn yet slumbered with its revelry.

XIII.

Now Rheingold's chamber in a tower remote,
 Looks with its lattice through a rich dark grove,
 Whose branches in a sea of shadows float.
 —A wall of ivy 'neath it and above,
 Like a full bosom breathing seems to move ;
 And lifting to the wind its leafy billow,
 Murmurs as if it round the casement wove
 Her bridal dreams ;—whilst many a jutting willow
 Doth hold communion with the sleeping maiden's
 pillow.

XIV.

Huge oaks and alders pensive greet the view,
And silver beeches by her lattice gleam.
Their bases hidden in a cloud of dew,
Fantastically vast, they upward stream,
Lengthening as if they grew from out a dream.
While pale blue mists in many a curling line,
Around her casement, on the twilight beam
Circle like witches' smiles,—grotesquely twine,—
And weird wood-music floats amid the dark woodbine.

XV.

A sloping garden lies beneath the tower :
A weeping willow high before it rears,
And curtains with its haze the bridal bower.
—Its tendrils hung like long depending tears,
As an embodied trance its form appears !
—Or—*image* of a mournful strain of sound,
—Presenting to the eyes *that* which the ears
Perceive in melody, when slowly wound
Some long wild strain of sorrow languishes around !

XVI.

So like the *form* of drooping melody
Appears the silent willow as it bends,—
Its long thin tendrils streaming to the eye
As long-drawn music o'er the ear descends.
—Now as the broken night from earth ascends,
But ere the sun has risen o'er the heights,
Whilst darkness with the kindling ether blends,
By paths which yet the flashing glow-worm lights,
There here assemble certain squires and youthly
knights.

XVII.

With serenades and songs of nuptial.
Deep in the hollows of this haunted grove,
Lulling the branches with their madrigal.
—Sweetly their voices through the twilight rove,

Melting the purple dewes with tones of love.
 —Their forms reclined upon the sloping lawn,
 They wake their songs to her who sleeps above.
 —Like waters troubled by the breeze of morn,
 Arose their melody amid the winds of dawn.

SERENADE.

Lady, 'neath thy lattice ride
 Songs of morn and summertime.
 As the curtained shades divide,
 Twilight-dreams about thee glide ;
 Mazy circles flit around thee
 And the Elfin-hosts surround thee ;
 Slumber, slumber 'neath yon willow,
 Sleep, and be our songs thy pillow.

The lawns are grey
 With opening day ;
 From the hunter's brooding horn
 Murmurs brim along the dawn ;
 With its muffled note the dove
 Mellows all the drowsy grove.
 Bees amid the wavy bine
 Break with warmly hollow drone,
 As a crimson flow of wine
 Is the luxury of tone.

Glances of the fountain's spray
 Tip the dark green bows with silver,
 Weirdly mingling night and day
 In the shadows of the elder,—
 Seeming there to weave and gather
 From the blended light and green
 A mantle for the fairy-queen.

The leaves are grey
 With opening day ;
 Swarming on the purple ether
 Fire-flies float above the streams,
 Like an Elfin-band with torches
 Ushering a train of dreams.
 And a long thin haze of dew
 Like a trance from earth ascending,
 Every shape and twilight-hue
 In a watery shadow blending,—

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Lingers with its mystery
 O'er the banks and woody swards,
 As a long-drawn melody
 Hangs upon a minstrel's chords.
 Until all is greyly seen
 Every lawn and sloping green,
 Fountain, coppice, stream, and cave,
 As a dim reflected scene
 Mirrored in a trembling wave.
 As in mazy circle turning,
 Now the Elfin-hosts surround thee,—
 Beauty, like a pure lamp burning,
 'Mid the curtained shades around thee !
 Slumber, slumber 'neath yon willow,
 Sleep, and be our songs thy pillow.

XVIII.

At length the Sun advanced with hazy stream,
 The dews and mountains purpling as he trod ;
 A rich blue heaven opened to his beam,
 And broadly widening 'neath his golden rod,
 Expanded, 'till it seemed the brow of God !
 New songs the matin-breezes freshly tune ;
 In freshened play the silver beeches nod ;
 Fresh-hearted maids their bowers abandon soon
 To search young bridal flowers amid the woods of
 June.

XIX.

Within her chamber, and in solitude,
 Somewhile half-waking, Rheingold lent her ear
 And heard the maidens through the summer-wood,
 Sing to the buds they gathered.—Slowly near,
 Beneath the tower they passed,—she rose to hear :—
 But ere she gazes, through the dark green close,
 Swiftly, like wind-caught flowers, they disappear.
 —Bright hair which wildly as their laughter flows,
 Around their giddy path a golden whirlwind blows.

XX.

And as each rosy hand the thicket strips,
 Whilst gossip their sweet labour lighteneth,
 The Morning seems to float upon their lips,
 With all its light clouds blown before their breath !

—And as a brook which newly wandereth,
 Their merry footsteps beat along the wood !
 —Beside her casement Rheingold harkeneth.—
 At length the grove resank in solitude,—
 Still in the lattice-shade the maiden musing stood.

XXI.

“They sing,—from out the wood they seek me
 flowers,
 Where *I* have gathered *much—much* yet must
 gather !
 —Oh things undreamt of in my father’s towers,
 Have blown upon me from the rugged heather !
 With all thy pangs, I bless thee, Doom of wonder,
 —Oh, Romont,—were I driven forth to rove,—
 The woods are full of thee !—with thy glance ever
 Would gaze the shadows of each distant grove !
 And each warm sunbeam touch—with thy warm touch,
 dear love !

XXII.

“Again I bless thee, Mystic Destiny,—
 And the dark hour when I before thee knelt !
 —First to the heather was I borne by thee,—
 So wildly beautiful *it* seemed,—I felt
 I loved,—and as my gaze in rapture dwelt,
 Somewhile methought I loved the heather only !
 —Then Heather, all thy beauties seemed to melt
 (Thy warmth,—thy wildness,—all which dwells
 within thee)
 Into a fair sweet Form which—*through thee*—looked
 upon me !

XXIII.

“Oh, how within the branches of yon willow
 Seem lurking the grey shadows of thine eye !
 —And with *thy* gaze it watches o’er my pillow !
 —Here all is part of thee !—beneath,—on high,—

Within the very walls I feel thee nigh,—
 And as they spread their dark broad arms around
 me,
 It is within thy breast I seem to lie !
 —Since leaving thee,—in all things that surround
 me,
 In every shape and sound and shadow have I found
 thee !

XXIV.

“To ward the Spell which my strange life controls,
 E’en as the Maid forewarned me have I done ;
 Oh Heaven forefend its power ’till our two souls
 Upon St. Margaret’s altar burn as one !—
 —If I again my mystic course must run,—
 Romont—we shall not part,—though I may wander ;
 —Throughout all Nature lies our union,—
 —In every leaf and branch we are together !—
 When woods and shadows part—some hand our souls
 may sever !”

* * * * * *

XXV.

St. Margaret’s Chapel, whose secreted shrine
 Their bridal wreath was destined to adorn,
 Arose within the walls of Elfenstein,—
 Apart,—the centre of a spreading lawn.
 —Soon as the noontide crowned the summer morn,
 Here on the sward assembled dame and knight,
 And those fair maids who wandered through the
 dawn,
 Seeking the new-born flowers with which to plight
 Her troth, and in their bonds two new-born hearts
 unite.

XXVI.

Soon thronging with a pageant-multitude,
 The green is warm with many a golden shade ;
 And many an olden passion was renewed,
 As lady, noble, warrior, and maid

Here stood in marriage festival arrayed.
 —Upon a marble stair in feudal state,
 With long white rods and purple robes displayed,
 Lord Romont's train the seneschals await,
 Whilst bell to trumpet answers o'er the gothic gate.

XXVII.

At length before their mute expectant eyes,
 All bright and golden as the clarion's tone
 Lord Romont issues in his wedding guise ;—
 A tunic of white velvet, gemmed alone
 With virgin silver, lit with emerald stone.
 —On his grey eyes the sunbeams from above
 Quiver like rays on trembling waters thrown,
 And his soft tresses as the breezes move,
 Blow like a maiden's breath about his brow of love !

XXVIII.

With many a damsel and attendant lord,
 With many a smiling page and belted squire,
 The lengthening train advances o'er the sward ;
 Whilst choral greetings from the distant choir
 Now mingle with the voices of the spire.
 —Then slowly from another porch appear,
 Beaming with white and silver-lit attire,
 A maiden-throng who gradually near,
 With rebeck, lute, and dance, with song and bridal-
 cheer.

XXIX.

Now customs of the house of Elfenstein
 From old remote observances, require
 That every bride proceeding to the shrine,
 Shall carry in her hands a silver lyre,
 And answer to the greetings of the choir
 With her own gladness told in sweet accords.
 —So Rheingold passed beneath St. Margaret's spire,
 And chimed so clear a music o'er the swards,
 As if the bells were striking on her silver chords.

XXX.

Whilst beaming o'er her song, her brow of light
Shone as the glory which surrounds the blest,
And seemed her spirit opening to their sight,
Her whole deep soul in that full arch confessed !
Unstained by ruby's fire or jewelled crest,
Too pure to brook the touch of diadems.
—Soft as a summer-cloud, her tender breast,
Lay blushing in its gauzy fold of gems,
And many a sapphire's light her virgin raiment hems.

XXXI.

Minstrels and bards dispersed amid the throng,
Spread music to her path and softly bound
Her footsteps on a floating bed of song ;
Until it seemed as echo fled around,
As if she trod upon a sea of sound,
Its golden tides pulsating to her tread.
—Whilst few could tell if tones she made resound,
Were from her harp or from her motion shed,
So subtly in her movements Sound and Touch were
wed !

XXXII.

A haze of rose and silver girt the scene ;—
Rose-crowned were her bride-maidens. As they
sped,
Young white-clad pages scattered o'er the green
Rich garlands, woven when the morn was red ;
Folding their path in flowers, till every tread
Was muffled in warm rose-leaves !—Slowly winds
The endless throng by lute and dances led ;
Their shoulders many a gauzy raiment binds,
And golden tissues floating, cloud the summer-winds.

XXXIII.

Before the fretted porch the bridal stood,
And choristers in many-clustered bands,
Advanced with incense, bell, and holy Rood :
When, as the assembled chiefs of Romont's lands

Bent low before the priest's uplifted hands,—
A fierce and sudden trumpet-blast without
Shook through the gothic fane !—Bewildered stands
Each pale arrested group in speechless doubt ;—
Ceased is the bridal-murmur, hushed the festal-shout !

XXXIV.

Again the flourish brake along the walls !
—Whilst priest and vassal glance in mute amaze,
Rudenz, his squire, Lord Romont swiftly calls,
And bids him speed to know whose trumpets blaze
Thus insolently loud ? With vacant gaze,
The squire departs ;—some lingering moments glide
In murmuring silence.—Once again they raise
Their eyes !—Returning to his master's side,
Thus Rudenz, red with haste, and in confusion cried :—

XXXV.

“ My lord,—the Bishop of St. Killian's Towers
With charges from the Holy See awaits,—
And with the Archbishop's name his voice empowers
To bid you hear him, and throw wide your gates ! ”
As thus the squire his sudden rumour states,
From lip to lip confusèd questions run ;
But when the roar of wonderment abates,
No more Lord Romont seeks his guest to shun,
But speaks the bridge be lowered,—the Bishop's will
be done.

XXXVI.

The huge portcullis rose ;—beneath the arch,
Whilst o'er the scene a denser throng is spread,
The Bishop Hermann's train in solemn march,
Leading their agèd lord with heavy tread,
Advances, till the lawn is traversèd.
A crimson velvet canopy displayed,
Rustles its jewels above his grey-strown head,
And to his tottering form by bearers stayed,
Lends majesty from out its dark luxurious shade.

XXXVII.

Her terrors hidden 'neath her bridal veil,
 In Rheingold's heart bewildered boding reigns ;
 But though she feels her inward spirit fail,
 By Romont's side she motionless remains,
 Until the Bishop's cortege slowly gains
 The sloping sward before St. Margaret's gate.
 —With searching glance he silently arraigns
 Lord Romont's gaze ;—the trumpet's tones abate,—
 And all with breathless pause the coming scene await.

XXXVIII.

Then Elfenstein the holy Sire addressed :—
 “ Most reverend Father, haply art thou here !
 And without question will we call thee guest,
 So be thou come to join our bridal-cheer ;
 No more auspicious omen might appear !
 —If more than this thy sacred will command ;
 But let thy pleasures open in our ear,—
 Prepared to answer thy desire we stand,
 With every gift and power which yields our bounteous
 land.”

XXXIX.

His white brows knit, the robed Bishop stood.
 With shaking hand he grasped his crozier-staff,
 And striking it on earth in wrathful mood,
 Replied :—“ We come not here your wines to quaff,
 To listen jester's strain or ribald laugh !—
 No bridal speech of blessing have we conned ;—
 But hither present, speak in stern behalf
 Of laws transgressed by this unholy bond,—
 Oh ! thou enthralled by spells,—and impiously fond !

XL.

“ By latter deeds in which thou hast foresworne
 The long much-honoured custom of thy sires,
 And hast to secret shrines thy nuptial borne,—
 The Church is well advised unholy fires

Have shaped this union from profane desires !
 Too long forbearance hath with justice striven,—
 To-day,—this hour,—its former voice expires !
 —Renounce yon Maid !—for new decree is given
 She pass the inquisition of the Church and Heaven !”

XLI.

“Lord Bishop, hear me !” Romont cried ; “thy speech
 Is swift,—unpausing ;—we would well receive
 All laws and guidance which the Church doth teach ;
 But yet may utter things which shall retrieve
 Its holy favour, and condition leave
 To mitigate thy mission !—Do ye seek
 From whence we did the olden law reprieve ?—
 Your righteous purpose swiftly shall ye wreak ;
 Such action covers naught that we may fear to speak.

XLII.

“Within my bride no hidden spirit lies,—
 Of naught in Church or heaven hath she dread.
 —She wears too much of heaven in her eyes,
 To fear it !—but she prayed me to be wed
 Before St. Margaret’s shrine,—I deem it led
 By love for this fair saint ; and even so
 My love for her ordained it !—I have said.—
 In truth much older customs, records show
 For lesser influence, full many would forego.”

XLIII.

But though with placid air and placid word,
 Lord Romont strove to meet his wrathful guest ;
 Beneath his lids mysterious shadows stirred,
 And more than he had uttered rose confessed.
 —Ere aught in further answer he addressed,
 Some moment musing stood the stern old man ;
 Then slowly spake :—“ If she be of the blest,—
 Nor witch, nor wandering demon,—if she can
 With holy heart and eye all things of heaven scan ;

XLIV.

"The Church decrees, to prove her innocence,
Your bridal pass before St. Killian's shrine.
If so to wed, she dare to issue hence,
The Pope is satisfied, declares her thine,
And will his blessing to the deed incline :
—If not,—the uttered interdict is told !"
Then pallid Romont stood ;—from line to line
Of those assembled, boding murmurs rolled,
And every ear awaits the voice of Rheinègold.

XLV.

He strove to cheer her with his perfect glance
Of light and love and confidence, and caught
Her hand in his ;—but dared no more,—perchance
Had he with other sign her ear besought,
A word of whispered counsel then had wrought
Fresh accusation, with the charge of spells.—
—Her veil unlifted, for a moment naught
Upon her trembling tongue in answer dwells,—
Then priestly tyrant's power her sudden voice dispels

XLVI.

"So be it !—hence unto St. Killian's aisle !
Since Heaven thither bids me go,—I go !—
—Though I had sooner 'neath St. Margaret's smile,
Have laid my heart in thine !" —Bewildered grow
The baffled Father's searching eyes,—although
Full many trembled yet at certain tone
Of mystic accent which had lurked below
The placid seeming o'er her terrors thrown.
Confused expectant thought in every face is shown.

XLVII.

But triumph kindles Romont's faltering gaze.
—Then all is motion ; with his robèd train
The Bishop leads their path ;—the trumpet's blaze
Bids all in form assemble,—none remain

Of priests or nobles.—From the silent fane
 Of Margaret the bridal throngs recede,
 And winding forth in long procession, gain
 The outer gate. Before them couriers speed
 To bid St. Killian's choir prepare for nuptial deed.

XLVIII.

Now passing from the towers of Elfenstein,
 One only path to Killian's Abbey lay ;—
 A shrunken passage through a black ravine,
 Deep-sunken in the forest,—shut from day
 By cloven rocks, high peaks, and boulders grey.
 —Amid these shades the pageant-multitude
 E'en as a golden river, winds its way ;
 Rousing the dim fantastic solitude
 Shed o'er them from the brink of many a climbing
 wood.

XLIX.

Around them many a leaden-lighted stream
 Along the rocks in jetting circles thrown,
 (Shot bleakly downward with a scaly gleam,)
 Falls in the deadening echo's hardened tone
 Like rattling steel upon the brittle stone ;
 And sound as of the clash of shield and spear
 From out the boiling torrent seemeth blown,
 As if, with all their battles buried here,
 The old Norse-heroes slumbered 'neath the rolling
 meer.

L.

And so with all his holy company,
 This way the bearded Bishop followeth,
 Sheltered beneath his crimson canopy,
 Its jewels rustling in the torrent's breath.
 —Strangely the dazzling cortege pictureth
 The harsh and bleared rocks through which they
 wander ;
 And strangely the grim forest shadoweth
 The bridegroom's spotless raiment girt with silver,—
 She whitely veiled and those who crowned with roses,
 lead her.

LI.

Some moments yet the looming path they follow ;
Until before them with a broad decline
The ravine slopes into a mighty hollow,
Jagged with brawling streams and trunks of pine
Thrown headlong by the tempest.—Many a sign
Of heaven's blast the stunted rock deforms.
Where thunder-crannies spread their blackening line,
'Mid prostrate oaks long shattered by the storms,
Distorted floods like serpents, coil their swollen forms.

LII.

Upon the opposing brow, the Abbey rears
Its terraced arches through the rolling dew,
Whose grim fantastic groins, deep-set with years,
Like frowns of bigot-priesthood strike the view.
—As toward the sloping brink the cortege drew,
From out a misty tower the heavy bell
Sent forth its toll ;—when suddenly there grew
Dark clouds above the hollow, with the swell
Of breaking thunders launched upon the sombre dell !

LIII.

The panic-stricken crowd arrested stand.
—Each wondering soul invoked his Patron's Name !
The tempest like a conqueror through the land
Rode onward 'mid the thunder's rude acclaim !
—When in the air a sudden silence came,—
A whisper through the heavens seemed to move,
Then hoarsely from a cloud a wreath of flame
Smitten in jagged circles from above—
Fell like a diadem shattered—from the brow of Jove !

LIV.

Ere they could bring their trembling lips to pray,
Down sank the rushing bolt with livid gleams
Into the hollow which before them lay !—
—An instant wildly played its forked beams

CANTO V.—ST. MARGARET AND ST. KILLIAN. 107

Amid the pines and the distorted streams,—
—Redly its shooting tongues the granite clave,
And lined the starting rocks with arid seams,—
Then shrank into the torrent's hissing wave,
And a hot fetid smoke boiled upward from its grave !

LV.

Speechless with awe, they gazed from stone and cliff.—
—A fierce and sudden sound arose behind,
As of the roar of caverned seas—as if
The horn of Lutzow¹ brawled along the wind !
—Strange Forms—amid the tempest undefined—
Seemed floating o'er the forest !—when there grew
A darker wonder o'er each stricken mind ;—
—Deep in the hollow,—'mid the driven dew,—
• Arose a Fawn of white ethereal shape and hue !

LVI.

With hoot and cry along the heavens rolled,
Fantastic Shapes fled on with misty sail !
—All eyes and hearts are turned to Rheingold ;
For suddenly a mighty rushing gale
Tore from her brow the roses and the veil—
And only mantled in the winds she stood !
—Then moaning fled into the withered dale !—
Lord Romont wildly darted towards the wood,—
But many a vassal's hand his headlong path withstood !

—There Rheingold leapt upon the Phantom's
form—

—There forth she rode amid the beating storm ;
The thunders smote above her maiden-head,—
And louder, deeper rolled the Winds their story ;—
But o'er her radiant shoulders as she fled,
Her wild locks floating lit the Storm with glory !

END OF CANTO V.

¹ The wild huntsman.

CANTO VI.

THE LEAGUE.

I.

'TIS Autumn,—and the woods are red with love !
The golden darkness of the autumn-beam
Now richly purples forest, dale, and grove.
—All things in earth and heaven *deeper* seem !
—Now Slumber holds a deeper power to dream !
—Through Music's Aisles more lengthened shadows
lie !
—There is a deeper murmur in the stream ;—
—There is a deeper brown in maiden's eye ;—
And in the Touch of love—a deeper mystery !

II.

For Love is deeper both in touch and voice
When Autumn dwells the hazy woods along,
Than when the glades in garish light rejoice.
—The restless Springtide with her laughing throng
Bids Love no more its secrecy prolong,
But all its thoughts in subtle tones reveal ;—
—Broad Summer wakens Love to speech and song,
In many words its passions to unseal ;—
But Autumn biddeth Love—be hushed and only *feel* !

III.

A year has passed :—along the ruddy wood
The Autumn in a shattered glory lies ;
A golden fullness brims along the flood,
Dark with the drowsy richness of the skies.

—Once more the sounds of revelry arise
From Elfenstein ;—another bridal train
Assembles thither, clad in festal guise !
Once more beneath St. Killian's Abbey-fane,
The brooding organ tolls a solemn marriage-strain.

IV.

And once again along the black ravine
The full procession's winding course is held,
Surrounding Romont, Lord of Elfenstein,—
Beside him Lady Yolande Bergenfeld !
—The pageant bravely flows,—but strangely quelled
And boding are the looks of those arrayed ;
—For many a glance of triumph undispeled
Sits in the features of the haughty maid,
But in the bridegroom's glance, full many an Autumn-
shade !

V.

Oh long his heart unyielding, had defied
The Church's counsel, menace, or command ;
And vainly priestly voices were allied
To teach him that the Wanderer of his land
Was some most cunning demon, whom the hand
Of Heaven's long-renting majesty
Refrained to strike or fetter,—till the brand
Of Hell and its infernal mystery
Appeared upon her brow of virgin mockery.

VI.

No voice or sign from her to give him strength,—
His doubts by monkish reasoning inflamed,—
The Duke and Bishop strove, until at length
But dimly conscious of the thought he framed,
His heart was led to hold that, if he claimed
The shielding power of Heaven from the fiend,
Some holy Christian consort should be named
His future bride ; and thus his soul be weaned
From all the spells to which infernal passions leaned.

VII.

So forth amid the Autumn-winds he led
The Lady Yolande to become his bride ;
Before St. Killian's altar to be wed,
Thus withering the powers which were allied
By Satan's artifice.—In priestly pride
The long procession passed the sombre wood,
To where the Abbey on the mountain-side,
Its heavy brow bent low with ivy, stood.
From out the fretted walls the dark chorales brood

VIII.

And like an organ swell the woods among,
Until the ruddy deer in drowsy herd
Lie down to listen to the holy song.
—From out the belfry's ivy greyly stirred,
Amid the carol of each Autumn-bird,
Whilst tower and fane its pending chime prolong,
The sweet-toned *Angelus* is dimly heard
Threading the thin bright air with rays of song,
With Unseen Hand of Light—seeming to touch the
throng !

IX.

Oh, as he passed beneath the Gothic door,
The shades of Autumn deepened in his face !
—As if they for the dead their lilies bore,
The crowd of nobles, priests, and maidens trace
Their course, until their offered garlands grace
The marble altar, whence the tapers shed
Their silent glory on the holy place.
—Here flowers and branches muffle every tread,
Far-scattered o'er the path of those who come to wed.

X.

Before him Yolande richly clad, and crowned
With wreath of lilies, veiled but fearless stands ;
Her bridal-maids and vassals group around,
With many a chieftain of her father's lands,

And squire and page who live for his commands.
The Duke himself in belted splendour holds
The right and fairest of his daughter's hands.
But as in Romont's ear the bell unfolds
Its hollow warning sound, wherever he beholds,

XI.

The gaze of one deep Eye his gaze doth meet !
—It looks upon him as the sun-rings dance
Through rosy-fretted windows to his feet !
It burns on altar, trophied shield, and lance !
Within the holy water seemed to glance
The melancholy lustre of that eye !
And as the organ with its measured trance
Of broadening sound awakens from on high,
Along the chords a thousand mingling voices die !

XII.

At length its many brazen clasps unbound,
The Bishop opes his tome of mystery.
In shining groups upon the marble ground,
Serenely bowed, the bridal pageantry
Await the solemn voice of Litany.
—The tolling of the bell above their heads
Fades like a soul into eternity !
—In blessing, as its fire the censer sheds,
Broad as the organ's tone, his hands the Bishop spreads.

XIII.

But little were their hearts in bridal mood ;
Long clouds ascended from the Autumn-dell,
And they who knelt thought more of Jesus' blood
Than of the lights which on his forehead dwell.
In vain the choir their virgin voices swell,—
In vain the *Gloria* rang,—the altar blazed,
Their music only seemed the dead to knell.
—The Bishop Hermann in his hands had raised
The Cross above the bride;—when, all in terror
gazed !—

XIV.

Before his lips a further prayer bestowed,
 A shrieking blast brake upward from the wood
 As if the Damnèd Huntsman thither rode !
 And hissing down the aisle where Yolande stood,
 —Dashed to the earth her lilies,—brake the Rood !—
 Then rolling backward,—o'er the forest sank—
 Lost in the voices of a growling flood !
 —But as each eye the scene with horror drank,
 Before another vision—all in wonder shrank !

XV.

Within the holy walls,—before their eyes
 There stood the Wanderer,—around her plays
 An influence which every curse defies !
 —From out the altar shot mysterious rays :—
 —Though all the choir had hushed the song of praise,
 From out the organ rang a wondrous tone !
 —The loneliness of Night was in her gaze !—
 And Autumn-shadows from her tresses blown,
 Seemed blending with the shades o'er Romont's features
 thrown !

XVI.

The multitude arose ;—the priest advanced,—
 And suddenly (the dumb confusion passed,)
 In many hands unsheathèd weapons glanced ;
 Threat upon shout and tumult followed fast,
 But ere another gaze was on her cast,—
 The Wanderer had fled into the wood !—
 —Fiercely Lord Romont sprang with looks aghast,
 Cleaving his way in mad bewildered mood,—
 But Bishop, Duke, and knight, and monk his path
 withstood.

XVII.

“ Give way !” he cried, “ hence !—quit me—I will
 forth !”
 —“ Sir Knight of Elfenstein !”—the Bishop spake,
 “ I do conjure thee by thy knightly worth
 That thou the madness of thy will forsake,

Lest Holy Church's anger thou awake !"
—"Hence to your Church,—curse whom ye will,—
but quit
Your hold upon me, or my sword shall make
The path which ye withstand !"—Then fury lit
The Bishop's glance, he cried :—"And do such words
befit

XVIII.

"The sacred walls in which we stand ?—Arise !
—I charge thee, Duke of Bergenfeld,—defend—
—Defend the Church—if faith within thee lies !"
—So forward stood the Duke :—"I prithee end
Thy blasphemy,—and timely make amend
For all thine uttered sacrilege !—or I
Do throw my gauntlet, and defiance tend !"
—Oh fierce and ready was the hot reply,—
An instant, and a hundred falchions ring on high.

XIX.

Despite the holy precinct, threat and shout
Drew down the hissing steel,—and hilt to hilt
The rival followers pressed ;—but ere the rout
Their heated blood within the Abbey spilt,
The Bishop,—he whose wrath had caused the guilt,
Perceiving that a deeper strife had grown
Than that on which his sudden fury built,—
Rushed to the altar-steps through men o'erthrown,
—Upraised the Host,—each blade fell clashing on the
stone !

XX.

Then rose his voice :—"Insensate men ! refrain !
Lest on ye fall the anger of the Pope !
For even now such deeds your spirits stain,
As only can with weighty penance hope
Redeeming pardon !—Altar, cross, and cope
This day ye have defiled,—so well beware !
For should to Rome such carnal deed elope,
The Consistory scarcely would forbear
To urge Anathema, before the papal chair !

XXI.

"Now hear me, Lord of Elfenstein !—and hear
 Thou wronged but too hot-handed Bergenfeld !
 The marriage unto which we did appear
 Must pass until the many things be quelled,
 Which have my benediction now withheld.
 —I shall my conduct unto Rome resign,
 And soon as perfect counsel hath dispelled
 The doubt of just decision,—shall consign
 The Holy Father's writ to Romont Elfenstein !

XXI.

"For much the things of sorcery and sin
 Which haunt him, whence arising none have wist,
 —With many hidden deeds which lurk therein
 In that he seeks but little to resist,—
 Require the Council judging, should consist
 Of holy men and learned.—In the while,
 I charge thee, Duke of Bergenfeld, desist
 From carnal feud, though wrong more deeply vile,
 Did ne'er a valiant man from Prudence' path beguile."

XXIII.

So all departed to await that day
 In boding silence : but with troublous care
 Did Romont's vassals and the Duke's obey
 The Bishop's stern behest they should forbear,
 For red in heart and hand that hour they were.
 Lord Romont hasted to dispatch a band
 To search each mountain-pass and woodland lair,
 But vainly,—vainly every dell they scanned,—
 No eye could track the Wanderer—from the Distant
 Land.

* * * * *

XXIV.

Some days have passed : the mists of Autumn-eve
 Around the castle-turrets as they break,
 An Elfinland of cloudy purple weave.
 —The Deepest Winds of Autumn are awake,

Rocking the stag to slumber in the brake.
—The lonely hern was poisoning on the rill :
The waters brimmed with sunlight ; and the lake
Shone like a Heavenly City from the hill,
As if descending thus John's Vision to fulfil !

XXV.

But as the winds grew deeper, and the night
More dark, a deeper note through all the wood
Seemed gathering, as if in dusky flight
A Spirit-army rushed along the flood !
—In deeper tones the torrent seemed to brood,
Striking its hollow chords with broader hand ;
In deeper Elfin-clouds the turrets stood.
—Romont (his squire attending his command,)
Went slowly forth, and wandered through the twilight-
land.

XXVI.

Through mighty groves they passed ;—high forest-
halls,
Where many a chieftain-oak deposed his arms,
And wild wind-music rang along the walls.
But neither wind nor stream the spirit calms
Of him who wanders in the rude alarms
Of doubt and wildered passion, seeking aid
And counsel of the forest's vesper-charms.
—Beneath a red nut-bosomed oak he laid
His fair but restless form, and Rudenz thus essayed

XXVII.

To question him concerning his intent :—
“ My lord is troubled much,—e'en I can read !—
If he to hear my counsel is content,
With his resolves I fain would intercede
To urge him that, whatever he concede,
He from contention with the Bishop cease.
—I fear she was no spirit of good deed
This Wanderer,—let prayers thy soul release,
My lord, with Holy Church—I prithee make thy peace.”

XXVIII.

"Thou speakest well,—my heart is troubled much.
—But I again have seen her,—*this* I know,—
She is no fiend !—nor shall the priestly clutch,
Which would upon the Duke my lands bestow,
And thither make my goodly treasures flow,
Tear her poor spirit from its only home—
Which is my heart !—But whither now we go,
There will I learn the Thing for which I roam,
Or thou alone, my squire, this night shalt homeward
come !

XXIX.

"Arise and let us onward through the glade,
And as we wander, I will tell thee more.
—The Church's awful writ is now arrayed
In all the thunders which their bells can pour,
When book and candle with their dreaded lore
The sinner unto endless wrath consign.
—It is decreed when yet three days are o'er,
Assembled in our halls of Elfenstein,
The Bishop and his clergy shall my fate assign.

XXX.

"If I will then abjure my fiendish art,
And strive with lengthy shrift and penance deep,
To make the Tempter from my soul depart,
And all my ancient vows with Yolande keep,—
Then shall my body with my fathers sleep,
Nor shall I live as excommunicate.
—If I defy their power, then shall I reap
The ready terrors which the damned await ;—
And every chieftain who his sin would expiate,

XXXI.

"Shall join in a crusade, which they will preach
To level our old turrets with the earth !
And all whose liege I am, who would beseech
The Church for mercy, shall as nothing worth

Regard the ties of tenury and birth,—
But fly me,—all who stay, the curse partake.
So if within that hour there is a dearth
Of old fidelity, 'twill scarcely wake
Mine anger,—so that I—do not myself forsake !”

XXXII.

“ My lord, then hear me !” Rudenz fiercely cried,
“ My spirit bows to Church and holy things,
But if the Church commands me quit thy side,
This I reject, whate'er rebellion brings !
—If excommunication o'er me rings,
Beside thee to the last I live and die,
In spite of threat and priestly murmurings ;
Nor will I ever hold a law that I
In clinging unto thee, am Heaven's enemy !”

XXXIII.

“ 'Tis well, good Rudenz ; and too long I know
Thy faith, to deem the curse would touch thy heart.
But rest in peace, thy lord will never sow
Around thee aught of that infernal art
Which they who judge, would unto me impart.
—I now have more to tell than thou may'st deem,—
I will confide thee whither we depart.
—When on her Face I muse,—then mark the stream,
Which only thing on earth, can as her features beam ;—

XXXIV.

“ (For waters only have a Gaze as pure
As *that* which lives within her wandering face !”)
—I have sufficient counsel to abjure
All doubt which in my heart could find a place ;
—But yet I am most human, and would trace
Some mighty sign,—or hear a voice which may
This horrid shadow from mine eyes efface !
—Rudenz ! I doubt not !—yet I doubt—and pray,
And feel my lips will falter—on the appointed day !

XXXV.

"Though when the memory of her Face comes o'er me,
 Then would I hear no voice,—behold no sign,—
 But only cling to that which is before me !
 —Oh I would view my towers of Elfenstein
 Crushed in the smoke of battle,—would resign
 My halls unto the foeman's victory,
 Could I but know the forests yet were mine,
 Could I but know the forests yet were free,
 Holding her pure and lonely—and awaiting me !

XXXVI.

"But I will know !—and will prepare my voice
 To answer when they bid me finally,
 Between their curse and freedom hold my choice !
 —This night I go to prove a mystery !—
 The fisher's legend well is known to thee,—
 The Ancient Legend of the Lake of Sighs ;—
 Which tells that when the Moon is watery,
 (As 'tis to-night,) a wanderer who hies
 Across that mystic wave,—whose Song for ever dies,

XXXVII.

"Yet ever lives along the gliding air !—
 —If to the centre of the breathing tide
 He dares to pass ;—an Island, wondrous fair,
 (But only by such wanderer descried,)
 Unfolds' its shore,—and bids his shallop ride
 Along its dark blue bays of ethery Sound,—
 Where Lurleys lute the wave,—and visions glide,—
 And inward revelations steal around
 The wanderer, whose soul that Hidden Land has
 found!"¹

XXXVIII.

—"My lord !—my liege !" exclaimed the affrighted
 squire,
 "Let not thy brain be frenzied with thy woes !—
 All holy men forbid the strange desire
 Which rises in thy heart !—oh turn,—repose !

¹ The reader will doubtless discern that I here make figurative allusion to certain interior regions of the mind.

—If truth be in the rhyming Legend, those
 Who thus the voice of sage and record spurn,
 Are withered by the Thing those waves disclose !
 —No more are known on earth,—no more return
 To utter ought of That their ears in madness learn !”

XXXIX.

“What matter ? be it so !” he fiercely cried,
 “Whatever world my spirit there surround,
 ’Twill not be *this* world !—hence,—whate’er betide,
 I care not whither now my bark is bound !—
 —I fain would make me *part* of that deep Sound
 Which in that lonely Lake for ever broods !—
 I would my weary soul no more were found,
 But mingled with the silence of the woods
 In which she wanders !—hence,—these are no frenzied
 moods

XL.

“Which fill my brain,—no empty murmuring,—
 —I must to something mystic and unknown,—
 I must pour forth my burden,—wander—cling
 To something,—some dark oracle whose tone
 If it but yield me death,—*this—this* alone
 Would be to *tell* me *all* I seek to know !—
 —All ?—Aye ! and more !—more than each monkish
 drone
 Could with his curse or book or bell fore-show ;
 —So follow,—thou hast heard it,—whither now I go.

XLI.

“But fear not,—I alone shall quit the shore :
 Thou shalt await me ’neath the moon-lit fern ;
 And if when thou hast watched,—I come no more,—
 Tell That the Priest !—and to thy home return.
 —Now on,—perchance to die—at least to *learn* !”
 So forth they passed ;—the squire no more replied,
 Though marvelling, he felt within him burn
 A thousand thoughts to which he speech denied ;
 Leaving his lord once more, his full unquestioned
 guide.

XLII.

At length unto the mystic shore they came,
Where all was silent save that endless Sigh
Which never pausing,—ever with the same
Long Spire of Sound went upward through the sky—
Where Bells around its Summit seemed to die !—
The wave grew dark beneath his touch,—and soon
When yet his drifting bark the shore was nigh,—
A thousand harp-strings o'er the deep lagoon
Shot through the gurgling waters, rounded in the Moon !

XLIII.

So stricken with much wonder sat the squire,
Amid the moon-lit ferns where he was bidden,
Listing the music of the Lurley's lyre ;—
Marking the clouds by winged wisps bestridden ;—
Musing on things below, by waters hidden ;—
Marking the ruined castles far on high,
Whose chiefs of old those mystic waves had ridden,
Whose cloudy tops so thinly upward die,—
The turrets seem to lengthen with the waters' Sigh !

XLIV.

An hour he watched beside that haunted land,
Nor further sign or shadow did he trace.
Then from the deepest hollow of the strand,
A bellowing wind arose,—in phantom chase
Huge clouds descended o'er the mountain's base,
—A hooting, with a sound like Lutzow's¹ horn
Rang through the sea of mist,—the heaven's face
So densely hidden shrank, it seemed the morn
Across its blackened ridges, nevermore should dawn.

XLV.

In dimly broken outline struck his view,
A floating Isle in apparition cast !
With palm-trees pointed upward through the dew
Like masts of some great vessel !—on the blast

¹ The Wild Huntsman Lutzow in German legend is present upon all occasions of omen. The wild incongruous sights and sounds here described as seen by Rudenz in his sleep, are supposed to be the incantation consequent upon a mortal daring to prove the mystery of the lake.

In awful looming Form the vision passed,—
 Rolling,—as if the waves of a simoon
 Beneath it struggled,—solemnly and vast
 It rode on high above the deep lagoon—
 And like a Phantom-Ship, stood black against the
 Moon !

XLVI.

A sound of cordage rattling in the gale,—
 With shouts of sailors down the welkin blew !
 —Hurried with rocking laughter o'er the pale
 And sheety waste, it drifted from his view !—
 Only the giant clouds its passage drew,
 Before his glances wander mistily,
 And shattered, darkly float athwart the dew
 Like blackened wrecks upon a winter-sea,
 By tempest smitten forth in jagged paths to flee !

XLVII.

Then starting from his rocky seat, he found
 That slumber had o'ertaken him, that sleep
 With vision did his troubled soul surround.
 But ne'ertheless with musings long and deep,
 He ponders much ;—for beams of morning creep
 Along the mountains,—comes his chief no more ?
 —With sudden frenzied thought he turned to leap
 Into the tide and seek the further shore,
 When brake upon his ear the movement of an oar.

XLVIII.

Then pallid as the newly-kindled East,
 Once more his youthful lord before him stands.
 —Forgetting all, his faithful heart released,
 He runs to give him greeting, and his hands
 He wildly presses ere he aught demands.
 " Most loyal squire," he said, " full hard and strange
 This night to thee have been my last commands,—
 —Aye ! tremble not, nor let thy colour change,
 Because I say the 'last,'—thy fortunes soon will range

XLIX.

"To seek another lord,—some goodly knight
 With happier,—less wild and wandering fate !
 —The Things which I have known and felt this night,
I am forbidden ever to relate !
 —This Answer only on my lips can wait
 For Duke or Priest or Curse,—‘ She whom I love
 Is pure !—no ducal spouse shall be my mate,—
 My falchion unto Her all things above,—
 I consecrate,—for her—to live or die or rove !

L.

"And he who strikes her honour is my foe,
 So be he knight or duke, or monk or priest !
 —She and her God !—no other cause I know !
 —Thou clearly canst discern all hope hath ceased,
 This lengthy feud shall end in marriage-feast.
 It is my doom to perish,—but as well,
 To teach my heart a mighty Love,—the least
 Of whose great joys would unto air dispel
 The passions which your knights and common min-
 strels tell !

LI.

"The Way to Love is rugged, therefore Heaven
 Hath shaped a rugged world,—and unto each
 Hath drawn a rugged path through tempest driven,
 To learn the *Thing* which storms alone can teach !
 —Brave Rudenz, thou wert with me in the breach
 When 'gainst the Turk with Hungary we strove
 At Jaicza's¹ siege !—But I do now beseech
 If ever thou didst share my knightly love,
 That thou my destiny—no further seek to prove.

¹ The wars between the Turks and the Hungarians were at their zenith in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. In these conflicts chivalry from all the countries of Europe took part, for, owing to the aims of the Ottoman, (which according to the threat of Bajazet that he would feed his horse with a bushel of oats on the altar of St. Peter were darkly portentous,) this struggle possessed an interest for Christendom almost equal to that of the Crusades. The town of Jaicza was taken by the united armies of Hungary and Venice, under Matthias Corvinus, the great monarch of the former.

LII.

"I will bestow thee treasure,—thou shalt go
 With all the riches Christian valour claims,
 And spurred thyself ere long, where trumpets blow
 Shalt lift thy lance for merry Christian dames!"
 —"Oh cease, my lord!—oh cease!" the squire
 exclaims;
 "Thy hand sustained my youth on War's red land;—
 —Thy generous heart, this lack of bounty shames,—
 —The aged peasant hath no less demand,—
 Oh, let me die where I—have lived—upon this hand!"

LIII.

He grasped it and upon it bowed his head.
 —Above them, bound with many an ivy tether,
 Its shadow an old crumbling castle shed;
 And as their eyes looked on it through the heather,
 Their hearts so warmly—fiercely beat together,
 That Romont ceased to strive, and felt that one
 At least, the darkest storm of fate would weather.
 —As morn brake o'er the mountains bleak and dun,
 The squire lay on his breast, and tears flashed in the
 sun.

* * * * * *

LIV.

Behold the day :—in Castle Elfenstein,
 The Bishop has assembled him the throng
 Of priest and monk and noble who combine
 To utter forth the charge of holy wrong
 By Church decreed ;—with exhortation long,
 Conjuring him to own his guilt and pray,—
 Abjure his witchcraft, and once more belong
 To that Communion which to disobey,
 Is body, life, and soul eternally to slay.

LV.

Such was the import of the words which now
 The Bishop spake in presence of the crowd,
 To Romont, who with fixed, unyielding brow
 Sate hushed and listening, whilst he read aloud.

—"And know !" he added, "by the Pope endowed,
We stand with power ordained, if thou deny
Just answer,—then in league against thee vowed,
To bid all Christian knights their force ally !—
—Romont of Elfenstein,—we harken thy reply."

LVI.

The Bishop re-ascended to his chair,
Inclining in austere but listening mood.
—All eyes expectant look upon him there,—
The spurred and crested son of noble blood,—
The peering monk from out his dusky hood.
—Some trembled as they marked his youthly grace ;
And from a fretted window as he stood,
A rosy beam fell slanting o'er his face,
And lit it like a shrine, till holy seemed the place !

LVII.

Till certain monks scarce heeding what they did,
Caught hold upon their beads, and told a prayer !
—"Most Holy Father ! Heaven now forbid
That I from Christian reverence should forbear,
Or scoff at those who priestly vesture wear."
So did his words begin :—in fearless tone,
Which rather seemed to reason than to dare,
He uttered all ; and strove to make it known
The charge of sorcery to him was falsely thrown.

LVIII.

Relating then how many wondrous signs
Assured him that the Being whom he sought,
Was neither witch nor fiend.—But that the lines
Of Destiny so mystically wrought,
His vows forbade him to discover aught
Of that which bore him witness of this thing :
But that of God or man he dreaded naught,
Whatever just ordeal they might bring
To prove his purity, and end their reasoning.

LIX.

He was prepared for trial in the lists,
To there encounter all who would oppose :—
But suddenly the angry priest resists¹
His further speech !—With wrathful glance he rose,
Exclaiming :—" Lord of Elfenstein ! we chose
Thus far to hear,—to prove if thou wouldst don
Hypocrisy to veil thy guilt from those
To whom it is most doubly proved !—Upon
More perjured heretic, polluted day ne'er shone."

LX.

Now had there aught remained of hope, or none
That he might reach the Church's dispensation,
The Duke,—the Priest, and all their kin as one
Together strove with fiendish emulation,
That Church should cast him from her generation ;
That he should perish, and his death appease
The hate which made his life their degradation.
So moved by carnal passions such as these,
The hoary Bishop sought with every art to seize

LXI.

All rumours,—scandals which the vulgar gave,
To urge the wrath of Rome against his cause,
And every hope of tolerance to waive.
—But yet his virgin fame in many wars
With long obstructions made their schemings pause,
As further in our record will be shown ;
And yet they might have failed to bring the laws
To that for which their subtle deeds were sown,
Had Fortune not appeared to make their cause her
own.

LXII.

For sorely the disclosure of a thing
With which the Bishop rose to hush the plea,
Upon his side did fearful balance bring.
—" Thou Lord of Elfenstein ! all tongues agree

¹ This trial, though wholly fictitious, is a tolerable specimen of the manner in which the "enemies of the Church" were treated.

Accurst and excommunicate thou be !
 —For it is known—thy last unholy deed !
 —Upon the waves where that infernal She
 Did wander with thee, hast thou stained thy creed
 With Arts of Hell, for which no prayer may intercede !

LXIII.

—“ Three nights elapsed,—a holy monk did trace
 The Path and Purpose of thyself and squire !
 —It is for *this*, thou couldst no longer place
 Thy heart in speech !—and couldst no longer hire
 Hypocrisy thy cunning voice to fire !
 —The secret of the Interdicted Lake,
 Thou didst explore !—in vain thy thoughts conspire,
 —No marvel that thou fearest to awake
 The Things which passed !—Wilt further—confutation
 make ?”

LXIV.

Then forth his beaming falchion Romont drew,
 Exclaiming, “ Cease !—no more I deign to plead !
 —Most Holy Vows—more holy, deep, and true
 Than ever sworn by thee on cross or bead,—
 Forbid me utter Things in very deed,
 Too pure and holy for your priestly ears !
 Ayel—Things which your gross hearts will *never*
 read,
 Though groaning with their fasts, your bigot years
 Grope on until the Grave its Revelation rears !

LXV.

“ Pure as the spotless steel of my good blade
 Is that sweet Soul whose fame upon it lies !
 —Why turn your faces ?—why your glances shade ?
 Oh well ye falter and abash your eyes !—
 As now its spotless beam your glance defies,
 So shall my Love look on ye in the Land,
 Where even priests forbear their homilies !—
 —So ye have heard !—Beneath my God I stand,—
 —Her love within my heart,—my falchion in my
 hand !”

LXVI.

Then in confusion the Assembly brake !
—Forthwith the thunders of the Church are rolled
On him who such defiance dared to make !
—The sickly candle blazed,—the bell was tolled
Which cast him from the congregation's fold.
—Swift through the land a proclamation flies
Exhorting Christian knights, and all who hold
Salvation dear, to arm them as allies.—
Indulgence from all sins !—behold the saintly prize

LXVII.

Of him who joins the Duke of Bergenfeld,
To shed his blood at Castle Elfenstein,
Until the Church's stubborn foe be quelled.
—The Duke, (well-pleased at length in battle-line,
To front the youth who marred his dear design
Of adding further realms unto his sway,)
Despatched his many forces to combine.
His battle-call a hundred chiefs obey ;
And ever nearer draws the dark expected day.

LXVIII.

And diligently Romont's house prepare
The long unused engines of defence.
Manning the ramparts, all remain to share
Their lord's anathema : and only thence
Some scullions fly to pay their Peter's pence.
—Though in his brain obscure forebodings swim,
Yet sword in hand, he waits in calm suspense ;
Feeling the Autumn forests brown and dim,
Contain Her pure,—and lonely,—and awaiting him !

LXIX.

But Siegerfrid's proud daughter,—how awaits
That child the conflict her desires have brought ?
How looks she on the newly-gathered fates,
By mercenary schemes of marriage wrought ?

—Now Lady Yolande, though her mind was fraught
 With many vices cunning, deep, and cruel,—
 Had somewhat of a nobler passion caught
 From olden sires, which like earth-hidden jewel
 That feeds its shrouded flame upon some secret fuel

LXX.

Low-hidden in the bosom of dank clay,
 —Entombed beneath ambitious scorn and pride,
 Within her sullen spirit burning lay.
 —She conscious grew of something that belied
 Her noble blood, but (nature still her guide,)
 Could not herself acknowledge base and weak !
 —So restless thoughts her stubborn soul divide,
 And (striving answer for those thoughts to seek)
 The chargèd sorceries,—the mystic signs which wreak

LXXI.

Their power upon her thwarted union,
 She has forgotten.—Nothing fills her mind,
 Save knowledge that the blest communion
 Of Marriage, when her wedding-troth she signed,
 Was then polluted !—For she sought to bind
 Her vow to Elfenstein and gave her hand,
 Not as the gage of love from womankind,
 But as the treasure paid for purchased land !—
 —Though gladly she the thought to silence would
 command,

LXXII.

It rose, as with her spirit she consulted.
 —Impetuous and peevish in her will,
 She with her very Conscience felt insulted
 In that it dared to question her !—but still
 Its endless tones her doubting bosom fill.
 —And so, indignant that it would not cease,
 She thought upon the days when axe and bill
 And mace around her flashing, gave release
 To her fierce heart in battle !—*this* Thought gave her
 peace!

LXXIII.

It said that "none could question she was brave!"
 For oft unto her father's wars she rode,
 And often her exploits the minstrel gave.
 —Too proud for meek repentance, she bestowed
 No thought on *that*;—she only feels the goad
 Of inward murmurings which peace refuse her.
 —So she would ride to battle with her load
 Of aching thoughts,—they could not *there* confuse her!
 —She should be brave—and *there* no voice would dare
 accuse her!

LXXIV.

Well-pleasèd was the Duke when news were borne
 That once again his daughter took the field;
 Again her blazoned jupon should be worn,
 And her white arm once more would arch the shield.
 Much wonder thence arose, but darkly sealed
 She held the Rage which to the action stung,
 And little dreamed her Sire 'twas *Thought Unhealed!*
 So days passed on;—till o'er the mountains hung
 —The Day when howling War unto her freedom
 sprung.

* * * * *

LXXV.

Oh redly o'er the forest sinks that day!
 Once more the Names of Christ and Holy Rood
 Are black with slaughter!—O'er the clarion's bray
 The screaming heron quits the shaken wood
 And Echo her polluted solitude!
 —Beneath the towers the hosts of all who own
 The monkish league, in fierce contending flood,
 Their hot blood beating to the trumpet's tone,
 Dash like a rolling wind around the battered stone!

LXXVI.

Down-beating o'er the wall the arrows rain
 And hiss like sheet-hail on their casques of steel;
 —Starts on each swollen brow the throbbing vein,—
 —Quivers each hand,—axe, crest, and scutcheon
 reel,—

And human souls their Inward Selves reveal,—
 The veil of custom rent by battle's stroke !
 —Crushed panting 'neath the conqueror's brazen heel,
 Distorted lips God—martyr—saint invoke !—
 And the torn banner shrivels in the yellow smoke !

LXXVII.

The Eagle called to Man with kindred yell—
 Mistaking him his fellow ! as he clave
 The mists whose crimson shadows as they fell
 Upon the river which beneath them drave,
 Pictured the siege in fire upon the wave,—
 Thrusting the lucid bosom of the tide
 With the hot beams of war !—Knight, lord, and slave
 Contending rode unto the Castle-side—
 And *further*—(without pausing)—many a soul did
 ride !

LXXVIII.

With axe in hold and eperon on heel,
 The Duke of Bergenfeld his host commands ;
 Their blows his heart and axe together deal,
 Full many a foeman falls beneath his hands ;—
 The first upon the scaling-tower he stands.
 —And Yolande breathing battle as she swore,
 In belted jupon leads her chosen bands !—
 But though she deemed the *Voices* would no more
 Here question her—they *still* speak through the
 conflict's roar !

LXXIX.

Down-bellowing rolls the cannon-rifted wall,
 The pounding engine cracks the scorched stone,
 And ribs of flame hiss outward in the fall
 Of granite, spar, and mortar upward thrown !—
 Beneath the grinding mace the casquets groan
 And redly glancing, splinter into fire !—
 On goaded by the trumpet's maddening tone,
 Into the breach—beneath the crumbling pyre,
 With scaling-ladders clutched, the host press higher
 and higher !

LXXX.

Rocked in the reeling flame, the shattered tower
 —Wrapt in the shooting conflict's fierce embrace,
 Looms darkly through the lightnings of the hour ;
 Now blackly starting from its battered place,
 It seems to *stare* in Slaughter's livid Face !
 Bleared, gnarled, and shrunken with the battle's
 scath,
 Then crackling, redly leaping into Space—
 Like a god-smitten world it cleaves its path—
 And booming rolls engulfed beneath the sea of wrath !

LXXXI.

Beaming like Pallas in her arching helm,
 Grasping a yellow banner and her glaive,
 Stern Yolande with the chosen of her realm
 Smote to the breaking wall !—when,—Mary save !
 Her corsèlet a shrieking arrow clave !
 —Like a spent Lightning on a thunder-bank
 —(Amid the shout which greets the stricken brave)—
 Upon the front of that dark host she sank,
 Whilst straining blood-shot eyes the scene of terror
 drank !

LXXXII.

If oft her passions lost her woman's name
 Oh yet there ran the heroine in her veins—
 And things which should have wrought a fairer fame !
 —Though she is weak—she smiles to hear those
 strains
 —The ever-hardy Trump—forgets her pains
 As smoke and flame and blast her bosom fan ;
 —E'en as a trumpet's tone her spirit wanes !
 That hour upon the front of battle's van,
 If not a woman, she—was something *more* than man !

LXXXIII.

Oh like a sinking sun she slowly bowed,
 Her armours blazing to the golden West !
 —As the royal Eagle stricken from the cloud,—
 Borne backward dying upon the whirlwind's breast

In a dark rush of glory,—so her crest
Sunk beaming in the wave of axe and spear !
—With horrid cry her startled followers pressed
High up the bristling wall,—shout, shriek, and cheer
Rang to the blood-lit heaven o'er her rugged bier !

LXXXIV.

The maddened Duke charged onward through the
breach !
—So when the day of that red siege was o'er,—
The solemn league which Holy Church did preach,
O'erthrew the power of Elfenstein, and bore
Him captive to the Adriatic shore.
—The “ Duke ! ” and “ Victory ! ” their cries proclaim
As through the shaken barbacan they pour ;
And with the shout, responsive to the name,
Far upward hoarsely shot the trumpet's tone of flame.

END OF CANTO VI.

(A year elapses between Cantos VI. and VII.)

CANTO VII.

THE PRISON BY THE SEA.

I.

THUS far of woods and forests have I sung ;—
And ere our Legend's winding course be sped,
Yet more fantastic records shall be wrung
From out the misty forest's murmuring bed.
Thus far my thoughts have ever sought to tread
Dark glades of legend-story, and as long
As I relate the Things which I have read
In dews and rocks,—and shape my legend-throng,
The old,—the royal Forest,—*this* shall be my song !

II.

My infant hands in many an olden day
Would cling to the brown bosom of the oak,
As if my mother's heart within it lay !—
And as its mighty shadows o'er me broke,
A long—long Musing in my mind awoke,
Which it will take Eternity to tell !
—If That which men call death, possessed a yoke,
—If human heart could ever sleep so well,—
My slumber should have been—deep in the darkest
dell !

III.

Upon the northern Adriatic shore,¹
Some half-mile inland from the winter-sea,
Arose an ancient forest, grim with lore,
A blear old shrunken forest, dark and hoar.

¹ I would once more remind the reader that the region here described is wholly imaginary.

Oh harshly there the torrents as they reeled,
Smote through the grating pines with frozen roar,
Which as the winds like eagles o'er them wheeled,
Clashed their bare arms like Odin striking on his shield.

IV.

A winter far beyond the southern clime,
Had touched the land ;—dark clouds through ether
 sped,
Branding the mighty oaks with parchèd rime,
Heavy, and rolling with their hue of lead.
—Sunk in a withered slough, the forest spread ;—
Branch, trunk and tendril, sheathed in icy scale,
Bristled against the wind, the streams were dead,
And with a swollen lustre, bluely pale,
Shone like the eyes of Death from out the blackened
 dale.

V.

It was a night when driven in the gale,
Long voices hurried o'er the winter-wood ;
Battling and broken fled the distant wail
As with the rush of hosts along the flood !
—His sturdy form o'er cast with silent mood,
Before the blaze which lit his cabin-door,
Deep in his native forest, musing stood
The woodman Dietrich ; as his wife Gildore
Prepared their evening meal from out her frugal
 store.

VI.

But as o'er morass, ravine, marsh and meer,
The hooting Winds a hollow hunt awoke ;
His rugged hearth sent forth a blaze whose cheer
Seemed full of ancient stories as it broke,—
—Ballads,—and wintry songs of olden folk !
A blaze which like red wine aroused his blood,
—Which o'er the frozen stones,—the blackened oak,—
And his rough features peering 'neath their hood,
Leapt like a warm heart beating in the winter-wood.

VII.

“Our daughter loves the tempest wife,” he cried,
 “And ever lingers most when winds are high !”
 —“Alack ! the child is strange !” Gildore replied,
 “She loves to wander ’neath a winter sky ;
 And hath in all her ways a mystery
 Which troubles much my heart !—Now Heaven send
 Her soul be spotless as the sweet blue eye
 With which it looks upon us !—Saints forfend
 She be an Elfin-child, to bring unholy end !—

VIII.

“But I have known strange dreams since she was ours,
 —Oh Dietrich ! many a dream so hard to read,
 I fain had never dreamt it !—Many hours,
 When I have sent her forth the kine to feed,
 I’ve found her watching in a lonesome mead,
 Within a forest little trod by thee !—
 Saints !—and have known the crucifix to bleed
 When she was praying before it !—Would that we
 Might rid us of the maid and ever childless be !”

IX.

“A truce unto thy crooning gossip dame !”
 The Woodman fiercely cried,—“wilt ever seize
 Mine even-hour of rest ?—wilt ever claim
 The hardly-purchased season of mine ease,
 To pluck mine ear with moonings such as these ?
 —To chide my daughter with thine idiot’s wail ?
 Mine arm is not so sore with felling trees,
 But it hath strength to teach thee other tale !—
 Beware thy tongue,—for hunger—bids my patience
 fail !”

X.

“I prithee peace, good-man,—thy words are wise !
 —I meant the child no evil, husband mine,—
 ’Tis doubtless age that fills my weary eyes ;
 —But,—by the glory of St. Mary’s shrine,—

'Twas yestermorn, at holy hour o' nine,
 I lent the blessed child my rosary
 To tell her prayers i' the sun ;—as I am thine !
 —When she had prayed—the beads shone wonder-
 ously !
 As if from every one—an eye looked out on me !”

XI.

“Peace !—peace !—for I will none of this, old wife ;
 —If aught save that thy witch's eyes behold,
 Is in the child,—it is some holy life !
 —When worn by thee and age my heart grew cold,
 I found her slumbering in the distant wold !
 Blown o'er her rugged pillow as she slept,
 Her tresses lit the Autumn-leaves with gold ;—
 And as I gazed, from out mine eyes there crept,
 —Oh warmer tears than I—for many a year had wept !

XII.

“‘I am a Wanderer from a distant land.’—
 ’Twas all she told,—I sought to know no more ;—
 For as her wild young locks about me fanned,
 It seemed *my Youth* might be the Distant Shore
 Of which she spake !—Whate'er the hidden lore
 She fears to tell,—I care not !—From the Strand
 Of long-forgotten Tears and Loves of yore—
 From out my Youth she seemed to come,—and stand
 Before me as a Wanderer from *that* distant land !

XIII.

“She loves the woods,—the storms,—the winter-
 sky ;—
 —But loves *me next* the Winds,—this hath she said !
 I wonder not, for in her restless eye
 The spirit of the forest lurks,—her tread
 Doth mystic music through the woodland shed ;—
 And ever wilder seems the heather's spray
 When she hath o'er its rugged blossoms fled.
 She loves *me next* the Winds,—'tis well, for they
 Seem more to be her father—than I ever may !—

XIV.

"Now speed thee wife, and turn thy lazy spit ;—
 —Make haste our meal,—for she ascends the glen,—
 Lo—all the frozen rocks of winter lit
 Within her golden shadow !—Haste thee then,
 For her young limbs have wandered moor and fen,
 Since first the morning opened her blue eyes,—
 And will be weary ;—though a thousand men
 Had not a heart so stout,—which so defies
 All danger or rough toil which in the forest lies !"

XV.

As thus he speaks, far up the sombre dale,
 Beating the frozen stones with melody,
 With merry pace she bounds, and runs to hail
 The old man with a laughing rhapsody,
 As wild and sweet and full of mystery,
 As the first flow of Morning o'er the sward !
 —"Far have I roamed !" she cried "so near the
 sea,—
 I heard it strike upon its swollen chord
 Deep through the murmuring pines ;—there are rough
 songs abroad !

XVI.

"And heavily upon each leaden cloud
 The Winter hangs ;—but father,—dear to me
 Is Winter !—When the heaven mostly bowed,
 Is darkened, then It mostly seems to be
Within the blaze our fagots cast on thee !"
 —So with a warm rude kiss he crowns her smile,
 Gildore forgets her dreams ;—ere long the three
 Before their rustic cheer their cares beguile :
 But loudly through the forest, Winter moans the while.

XVII.

Oh here she dwells ! here lastly Fate hath sped
 Her long mysterious path of life !—The door
 Of this dark hut now shields her ;—here her tread
 Doth in the old man's heart beat Songs of yore !

Deep in the shrunken forest grim with lore,
 Here does the Maiden with the woodman dwell ;
 But *that* which Life is now to her,—as o'er
 The rugged land she flees by crag and dell,—
 This only can the woods,—the winds,—the tempests
 tell !

XVIII.

Since Romont's castle fell, a year hath passed.
 All hitherto unknown to her his fate ;—
 But more anon our chronicle shall cast
 These things within its strains, and shall relate
 The further fortunes which the youth await.
 —As now with flesh of kine and rough brown bread
 The woodland group their hunger satiate ;
 The Dame Gildore uplifts her wrinkled head,
 Exclaiming ;—"Grete' child !"—(for thus by humour led,

XIX.

The honest pair had named the wandering Maid,
 Since other name she never would disclose :)
 —"Grete,—thy father is with toil o'erweighed ;—
 To hear thy voice this hour he ever chose,
 And fain would in its music now repose.
 So waken thine old ditties daughter fair,
 Which long ago his weary eyes did close,
 When he was sick o' fever lying there,—
 Only the woods and thee, his pains to help him bear !"

XX.

The blazing fagots o'er the maiden shine ;
 Her features red with Autumn,² whilst her eye
 Doth in the crackling caverns of the pine
 Full many a golden Autumn-wood descry,

¹ "Grete,"—Margaret, of which "Gretchen" is the short. The reader need scarcely be reminded that it is to be pronounced as if spelt (in English) "Graytay."

² "Autumn" is here used in the abstract, not signifying that to be the season, but in the sense of that *Autumn odour* which ever lingers in the blaze of winter-logs throughout Winter

Pictured amid the cinders as they lie !
 Bending her glance their fiery shapes among,
 The ruddy hearth she draws her settle nigh ;
 And gazing wildly as the winds prolong
 Her tones adown the glen,—thus sings her misty song.—

LADY GUEY.¹

I.

Blushing,—blushing was Lady Guey !
 She was of the south and golden-browed,—
 But her eye was dark as the southern night ;—
 Dark was her robe as the western cloud !
 She sat in the shade of the red May-tree,
 And the woods and the gales sang cheerily ;—
 “ Dark Roses,—dark Roses
 Blow in the North-wind ! ”

II.

Musing,—musing was Lady Guey !
 From out of the wood Lord Huon sped,
 And led her forth from the red May-tree !
 In an Abbey grey was their trothal read.—
 They sat with their guests and their minstrelsy,
 And the bridal-maids sang cheerily ;—
 “ Red Roses,—red Roses
 Blow in the North-wind ! ”

III.

Roaming,—roaming was Lady Guey !
 She roamed by the sea, for she heard in the wave
 For ever a music which called her away !
 As she roamed, from the wreath which her bridal gave,
 The flowers were broken and strewn on the sea,
 And the rocks and the caves sang mysticly ;—
 “ Wild Roses, wild Roses
 Blow in the North-wind ! ”

IV.

Sleeping,—sleeping was Lady Guey !
 For she listened the music which called her away,
 Till her spirit arose as the garland brake,
 And followed the flowers which were tossed in the spray !
 She lay on her bier by the summer-sea,
 And the winds and the waves sang mournfully ;—
 “ White Roses—white Roses
 Blow in the North-wind ! ”

¹ “ Guey,” to be pronounced as if spelt “ Gay.

XXI.

The maiden ceased, still bending her full eyes
Deep in the rugged caverns of the blaze ;
As if amid the shapes which fall and rise,
She saw the subject of her misty lays !
—But as without the storms of winter raise
Their voices—dimly gathered in the roar,
The ceasing music on the whirlwind strays,
And rudely wafted, seems to wander o'er
The spreading forest,—outward—to the distant shore !

XXII.

“Thy song,” the woodman said, “is strange and
wild !—
Whence didst thou learn such ditty?—mine old head
Is pleased,—yet troubled at its music, child,
As when I hear the leaves of Autumn shed !”
“I caught it from the North-wind as I fled
This morn along the Owlet’s Hill !” she cried ;
And with a deeper gaze the embers read,—
Marking the ruddy hollows gaping wide,
As if another Song within them she espied !

XXIII.

Now from these woodlands issuing to the shore,
The waters formed a bay whose further side
Revealed a castled rock, whose ramparts wore
The strength of Ocean in their storm-girt pride.
—Full often here would Dietrich roam the tide.
Aiding with fisher’s toil his frugal lot,
Sometime his net and oar the woodman plied.
With one rude hut his hands had crowned the spot,
And here his skiff lay moored, within a neighbouring
grot.

XXIV.

So now he spake ;—“Fair daughter, as our bark
Did bear thee yestermorn upon the bay,
Along its further border didst thou mark
A princely-fashioned fortress, proudly grey ?”

—With swift aroused tone, she answered ;—" Aye !"
 —" I know thy mood," he added, " and how well
 Alone thou lovest to pursue thy way.—
 Throughout the morrow here I fain would dwell,—
 To-morrow in this region, have I much to fell—.

XXV.

" And so a task will set thee, which thy hand
 May well performing, speed me many hours.
 There lies within our cabin on the strand,
 A pile of logs the gaoler of those towers
 (Whose curlish temper dally quickly sours,)
 Hath pledged me to deliver by the dawn.
 —The path thou knowest,—through thy favourite
 bowers,
 So speed thee to our bark at early morn,
 And thither waft them—ere the dews be upward drawn."

XXVI.

" That will I father !" cheerily she cried :—
 " But,—(oft the question from my lips would stray,)
 I prithee tell me who doth reign beside
 The ocean, in that castle proudly grey ?"—
 —" And hast thou never heard it till this day ?"
 Exclaimed the woodman,—" harken then, and I
 Will tell thee of him, though I thus display
 A thing I fain might hidden from thee lie,—
 A thing of horror which—may cloud thy pitying eye !—

XXVII.

" There Siegerfrid, the Duke of Bergenfeld"—
 —She started from the hearth ere more he spake,
 Recoiling, all her brow with pallor quelled,
 As if from out the flame there leapt a snake !
 —" What ails thee daughter ?—wherefore dost thou
 quake ?"
 Exclaimed Gildore,—" She stares upon the flame !—
 What hath bewitched thee daughter ?—child awake !"
 —But suddenly her thoughts their power reclaim,
 And calmly gazing ; thus, she answered to the dame ;—

XXVIII.

"'Tis naught !—I gazed into the fagots' roar,
Until my fancy from the shadow spelled
So keen a Shape, I trembled,—'twas no more !
—How didst thou name him,—who the castle held ?
—" Sir Siegerfrid, the Duke of Bergenfeld,"
The woodman answered, but with cunning thought
She put the question, lest within him dwelled
Suspicion that the Name her terror wrought.
Once more unto his story, Dietrich's lips were brought;—

XXIX.

"Late years have bred much sorrow to the Duke,
And a strange story mingled with his woes :
Although defeat,—the Church's dread rebuke
And long destruction have befall'n his foes.
—One only child, a daughter,—Fortune chose
To yield him ;—stern but beautiful in face,—
(The Adrian wind upon no fairer blows):
And her sometime he sought as bride to place
Beside a youthful heir, of Tyroleàn race.

XXX.

"They called him Romont, Lord of Elfenstein.
Their courtship was advancing, when there came
A fearful thing to pass, which closed the shrine
Against their union.—Though of spotless fame,
This youthly knight did foster things which shame
The blessed name of Christian !—things of dread
Which but the curse of Holy Church may claim !
—Forsaking her for whom his vows were shed,—
He with an Elfin-lady, sought to woo and wed !

XXXI.

"Oh fearful, dark and never to be told
Where all the things which in that day befell !
In vain the Church exhorted, for the bold
Unyielding sinner in his sin would dwell ;

Until such foul unholy deed to quell,
The Pope declared him excommunicate.
The angry Duke and all the chiefs who swell
His mighty power, were urged to expiate
Their shame with blood,—in arms, their wrath to
sate.

XXXII.

“Now Lady Yolande was a warlike fair,
Beneath her woman’s face her father’s heart
Lay burning ;—so she e’en resolved to share
The pains of war.—Renouncing beauty’s art,
She clad herself in steel to bear her part.
But in the fatal siege the Duke did wage,
His child fell slaughtered by a wandering dart !
—His forces maddened, strove with fiercer rage,
And victory crowned them ; but, could not the sire
assuage !

XXXIII.

“Destroyed and sacked was Castle Elfenstein ;
And he, the seeker in forbidden lore,
Whose brain was drunken with infernal wine,
Brought captive to the Adriatic shore.
For Romont’s death, the father (wailing o’er
His slaughtered child) had given swift decree ;
But many charges certain Prelates bore
Of sorcerer,—declared his trial should be
Before the inquisition of the Holy See.

XXXIV.

“Now since that day, through one long year hath sat
A grave tribunal chosen by the Pope ;—
For his unblemished fame of old begat
Full many things which gave the fathers hope
That mercy with the charges yet might cope.
And through the darkness of forgotten laws
For long an old much-troubled priest did grope,
Yearning to find salvation for his cause ;—
Oh stoutly was his fate contested clause by clause.

XXXV.

"If he be truly spotless or defiled,
Is more than such as I may know or tell ;—
But this I know, that mourning o'er his child,
(Though not by Romont's will or deed she fell);
The Duke, for ever cunning, plotted well
To turn them from all clemency and ruth ;—
Aye !—by the Mass,—he was prepared to sell
His own sweet soul to Darkness, if in truth,
He only thus might purchase sentence on the youth !

XXXVI.

"Now there was one possessed of equal hate
Unto the Lord of Elfenstein ;—a priest,
—St. Killian's Bishop.—Many ties relate
Him unto Bergenfeld ;—so when they ceased
To urge for death,—he with his wiles increased
The Duke's designs by many a hidden lure !
—And yet they say the boy had been released,
But that no power his spirit could conjure
To answer certain things, they willed he should abjure.

XXXVII.

"So Saints behold !—at length his doom is given !
—Two days from hence the sullen edict lies,
From off his knightly heels the spurs be riven,
—A sorcerer,—upon the stake he dies !
—But would I had not told thee this !" he cries,
"For I have clouded o'er the ruddy blaze
Which shone so brightly on thy watching eyes !"
—"Hads't thou been hushed," she answered, "some
few days
Had told it,—and thy glance some fearful thought
bewrays."—

XXXVIII.

—The woodman and his wife in silence muse.'—
"The cool wild morn," she cried, "will fill the wood,

¹ The reader must not be surprised at this speech, although I have described a heavy winter in the land. For upon so southern a shore as the Adriatic, even if a hard winter had descended, it would be likely at any hour to give place to the milder atmosphere.

And soft fresh odours blow from out the dew,—
 —The throstle wake to seek her young their food,
 And hazy gladness brim along the flood,—
 Yet—they will burn him in the same sweet light
 Which makes the ring-dove murmur to her brood !
 —The winds which lift my tresses in their flight,
 Will fan the flames around him !—blackening heaven's
 sight !

XXXIX.

“They will burn !—torture !—quench his grey sweet
 eyes—
 And yet the morn will be so fair—so young !”—
 —With wildered glances Dieterich replies.—
 “Now wife a curse upon my prating tongue !
 —Oh, comfort her, Gildore !—my words have wrung
 Tears which my rough hands tremble to have drawn,
 But are too rough to stay !”—Gildora hung
 Her arms around the maid,—“My only born !—
 Born o' the woods !” she cried, “for thee will ever
 dawn

XL.

“The morning bright and pure as thy sweet face !”
 —“Weep not !” the woodman said,—“but hast thou
 known
 The prisoned youth—or any of his race ?”—
 —“Aye !—all the land has heard,—not I alone,—
 His fame in every wandering minstrel's tone !
 —One met me in the wood, and o'er his lay
 The image of the captive youth was thrown,—
 That he is fair, with eyes as sweet and grey
 As the blue shade his prison casts upon the bay !

XLI.

“So having woman's heart, I can but weep !
 —Yet I will strive to think on it no more.—
 Mine eyes for many hours are proof to sleep,—
 So I will saddle Nickel ; and before

I lie me down, will ride unto the shore ;—
 There, in our cabin will I sleep this night !
 —I slumber best when rocked by ocean's roar,
 Thou knowest well ;—and through the woods my flight
 Will chase these lurking phantoms from my fevered
 sight.”—

XLII.

“ For any wench save thee,” the woodman said,
 “ This were a wild desire ; and any heart
 Save mine, would tremble that thy foot should tread
 The forest at such hour ;—but,—child depart,—
 For many months have taught me that thou art,
 By this thy constant humour ;—and I feel
 That of the woods thou art so much a part,
 I ne'er may fear to trust thee and thy weal
 In their broad arms ! which first did thy sweet form
 reveal !”

XLIII.

“ The child is strange !” exclaimed Gildore, aside,
 “ Now by the glory of St. Mary's shrine ”——
 —“ Would'st thou awake thy gossip ?”——Dietrich cried,
 “ If thou hast love for any limb of thine,
 Now hold thy prating !”——Forth amid the kine,
 Which in their pen awoke, and thought it Day
 As she stood lonely in the white moonshine !—
 She passed unto the stall where Nickel lay,
 The woodman's horse, which oft had shared her
 wandering way.

XLIV.

Him saddled, she to Dietrich bade farewell,
 And rode away beneath the winter-wind,
 Which, as she vanished through the hollow dell,
 Moaned darkly unto those she left behind,
 As if they never more her path should find,—
 A Path known only to the Winds and Her !
 —“ To Heaven's keeping be the child resigned !”
 Said' Dietrich ;—“ Wife !—my beads !—strange echos
 stir,—
 And I would tell my prayers for our wild wanderer !”

XLV.

So forth alone, along the winding waste
 Of cloudy lands, she sped from her abode ;
 And as her tender eyes the winter faced,
 Far down before her, as she trembling rode,
 With sweeping arm out-stretched, the whirlwind
 strode,
 Seeming to blanch the woods before her path,
 And with its icy touch her steed to goad.
 But little heeds her heart the winter's wrath,
 Her beating breast a fiercer desolation hath.

XLVI.

"Romont !"—she wailed along the streaming wind,
 —"Deep in the Winter's heart I feel thee hidden !
 Amid the Winter's voices will I find
 Thy Voice !—Oh, since by Destiny beridden,
 To blend with thine my spirit was forbidden,—
 Feeling the Winds would lead me back to thee,
 For ever beckoned onward have I ridden !—
 —Now lead me, Winds, o'er desert, rock and sea !
 Lead on as Ye have lead !—Oh Winds, I follow Ye !

XLVII.

"Too well I read the record in thy gaze,—
 Of how they wrought upon thee, till thy brain
 (Bewildered by my mystery and days
 Of endless watching my return in vain),
 No longer could believe me without stain ;
 But held me for a fiend whom it behoved
 Thy heart to pray against, lest it should gain
 Thy purchased soul !—too strong the trial proved !
 I wondered not !—how long—how long wert thou un-
 moved !

XLVIII.

"But strangely-working Fate denied them this,—
 And bore me to the altar where he knelt
 In yielding doubt !—mine eyes but gazed in his—
 And vain was every curse which priest had dealt !

—But tumult smote the sacred walls,—I felt
 My spirit summoned thence ;—transfixed he stood
 —There with his yearning eyes upon me dwelt !
 —Bewildered and in dread I sought the wood,
 And with the Phantom fled—o'er wilderness and flood !

XLIX.

“ O Heaven! where shall all these mysteries end ?
 —I ask,—yet feel within my answering soul
 The *Thing* to which their hidden workings tend !
 —The storms may o'er my naked bosom roll,
 And smite it with their winds, but from *them* stole
 The Thing of Life within me cast for ever.
 —This Purity—this is the Living goal
 To which the Winds have led me o'er the heather !
This—this—I would have roamed—eternity to gather !

L.

“ I feel so pure when winds are beating o'er me,
 I could no more to dwell in castles turn,—
 Though destiny to Romont should restore me !
 —No,—I would bid him with me ride and learn
 The Love which Winds can teach!—how breasts
 can yearn
 Which storms have smitten!—Oh I feel the goad
 Of thoughts which tell me *Loves yet deeper* burn,
 And in the forests have some far abode !—
 If ever *onward—onward*—seeking them we rode !

LI.

“ But if I seek them,—*thou* shalt seek *with* me !
 —Romont—I would not *thither* ride alone !
 —How said they?—prisoned?—Aye !—but I am
 free ;—
 The Love which hath from out the tempest blown,
 Shall teach me how to tear thee from their stone !
 —Oh Winds which taught me love,—instruct me now !
 Ye Woods whose branches have within me strown
 The seed of purity,—in pity bow !
 And with some hidden power, my sinking heart
 endow !

LII.

"I must ride onward,—if I pause, 'tis death !
 Whither I hasten thus?—to what strange deed?
 I know not,—so my passage quickeneth,
 I yet can live, endure,—my thoughts can feed
 Upon the restless motion of my speed,—
 But if I pause, I madden !—I will on !"—
 By knotted furze and bramble fled her steed ;
 Until she passed the forest, and upon
 Her frenzied path the light of winter's ocean shone.

LIII.

Through tangled stones along the weed-grown shore,
 Dismounting here, she led her beast until
 She stood before the lonely cabin-door,
 Whose creaking wooden walls with voices shrill
 Re-echoed to the sounds of rock and hill ;
 And clenching in their cracks the tortured wind,
 Seemed pressing it to shrieks !—Half-waking still
 With dim-conceived intent and purpose blind,
 In rudely-shapen stall, the beast she then confined.

LIV.

And issuing, sat her down upon a stone,
 A ledge o'ergrown with weeds and drifted shell.
 From out the caverned coast deep echos thrown,
 Along the gale in broken beatings fell.
 Before her Ocean with its globing swell,
 Looked large in the great Moon and round with light.
 But fixedly her eyes unmoved dwell
 Upon the fortress and the castled height
 Which from the opposing shore, cast shadow on her
 sight.

LV.

Dimly with hazy form the turrets rise,
 So blending with the ocean at their base,
 They seem to grow from out its lengthening sighs !
 And streaming upward, purple drawn, they trace

Weird outline in the heaven's cloudy face ;
 There, terraced with the storms their summits fade !
 Whilst the blear Moon pursues her phantom chase
 Along the ridges of the thunder's shade,
 Through which with crooked toil she hath a passage
 made.

LVI.

But long ascending voices fill the gloom
 Which shrouds the turret's base, as if they rose
 From out the hollow of some ocean-tomb
 Deep hidden where its vaulted caverns close
 O'er many a mystic region of repose.
 Till thus the castle from the sounds they breathe,
 As if dream-built from a vision, grows !
 —Silent she marks the tossing eddies wreath ;
 When to the Sea her lips their burden thus bequeath.—

LVII.

“ Oh for the Sleep thou vainly seemst to crave !
 —Oh for a slumber endless as thy sigh,—
 To close mine eyelids as thy folded wave !
 To bear me whither all thy murmurs hie,—
 The Hidden Shore on which thy voices die !
 —I love thee thus,—but oftener have scanned
 Thy features,—when beneath the averted sky,
 Thy swollen arms have grappled with the land,
 As if to tear the world from out its Maker's Hand !

LVIII.

“ So awful, when *thou* mournest from thy deep,
 Thou rend'st Sorrow,—human woe is vain,—
 And mortals tremble *they* have *dared* to weep !
 —When thou art troubled, passions in thee reign
 The bosom of a god might not disdain,
 Nor feeling them, from heaven's throne be bowed !
 —Oh how thy blue lips shooting upward, strain
 As if to drink the lightning from the cloud !
 Till drunken is thy breast, with savage life endowed !

LIX.

“Then as I view thee battle with high Heaven
 —To thunder’s knotted scourge thy bosom bare,—
 It seems as if a God to madness driven,—
 (Mocked by the things which he created fair,—
 Goaded by man’s corruption to despair,)—
 Had made *thee* in a Madness all divine !
 Bidding thy form his tortured aspect wear,—
 And in thy dark distorted features shine
 The agony of a God,—unbosomed thus in thine !

LX.

“Oh in what part of yonder looming walls
 Dark with the haze of Ocean, dost thou lie ?
 —In vain the dungeon-pile thy soul enthrals,—
 One *broken* heart has pulses which defy
 The *wholeness* of a fortress’ density !—
 And which can beat through stone with wilder force
 Than could the engines of a host ally
 To hurl against it !—But my spirit’s source
 Of power to suffer fails,—I must pursue my course !

LXI.

“Winds !—lead me o’er the waters as ye led
 My path athwart the forest !”—Rising thence,
 And traversing the shore with hurried tread,
 Borne onward with a half-bewildered sense,
 She wanders to the creek whose rocky fence
 Protects the woodman’s anchored bark ;—her hand
 Unlocks the cable, and with thought intense,
 She steers it outward from the lonely strand,—
 Along the wastes of sea which to her glance expand.

LXII.

Oh how she trembles as her rustling oar
 Troubles the liquid darkness of the wave !—
 Her wild eyes gazing to the castled shore,
 She slowly issues in her bark to brave

The winter-flood ; but as the ripples lave
 Her gliding prow, all sounds her ear arrest ;—
 The sodden echos of the water-cave,
 The cries of sea-birds o'er their midnight nest,—
 Like arrows shoot amid the pulses of her breast.

LXIII.

No watchers on the dusky ramparts stir.
 —She knows not in what region Romont lies,—
 But as his bosom opening unto her,
 The broadening shadows fold her as they rise ;
 And as beneath a wave-girt tower she hies,—
 Advancing thitherward, she feels as if
 She entered 'neath the shadows of his eyes !
 —And ever as she further nears the cliff,
 Their grey warm *presence* seems to overshadow her skiff !

LXIV.

—So full—so full of *him* all things appear,
 She seems to touch him even in the wave !—
 —She pauses, gazing upward.—Vast and drear,
 The turrets rose above her, till they clave
 The tempests which along their summits drave.
 She gazes at the clouds which o'er her brood ;
 Until at length the old forgotten stave
 She sang upon a day within the wood,
 Flows from her lips along the silent winter-flood.—

I.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love !
 The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;—
 But vainly the songs of the woodland shall call,
 Unheeded they die on thy grey castle-wall !
 —In sleep and in silence within the far glade
 I beheld thy dear Face as I sorrowing strayed ;—

II.

Oh wild were the Songs of the Forest my Love,
 As I watched thee in slumber within the May-grove !
 But darkly thy battlements frown on the day,
 —The Face I beheld as it slumbering lay,
 Is shrouded and lost in the grey castle-wall,—
 Oh vainly the notes of the woodland shall call !

III.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
 The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;—
 —Oh vainly the smiles of the Summer shall fall,
 Thy dear Smile is lost in the grey castle-wall,—
 —Thy warm Smile is hidden within the cold stone,—
 I must weep, I must smile through the Summer alone ;—

IV.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
 The Songs of the Forest invite thee to rove ;
 —Oh vainly the voice of the woodland shall call,
 Thy dear Voice is lost in the grey castle-wall,—
 Thy dear Voice is hidden within the cold stone,—
 I must wander and sing through the forest alone !

V.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love ;—
 —Vainly, oh vainly in glory above
 The glance of the heaven is cast upon all,—
 Thy dear Glance is lost in the grey castle-wall !
 Thy dear Gaze is hidden within the cold stone,—
 Its glances are darkness,—and I am alone !

VI.

The Songs of the Forest invite thee my Love,
 But grimly thy battlements shadow the grove !
 —At the foot of the stones of thy grey castle-wall,
 With many a ripple and murmuring fall,
 Endlessly, weirdly the waters entwine,
 —Oh when shall my Spirit be mingled with thine ?—

LXV.

She ceased in tears ; and (o'er the waters bowed),
 A wind fell softly from its dewy bower
 And passing, caught her song into a cloud.
 —Then dimly in the muteness of the hour,—
 From out the bosom of the sea-girt tower,
 Oh God !—a Voice descended on the wave !
 —She starts bewildered,—ocean seems to cower
 In listening silence,—scarce the ripples lave ;—
 Thus answers that dim voice the old forgotten stave :—

" Though fortress and rampart encompass me Love,
With thee and the Songs of the Forest I rove !
— Though battlements hide me, thou art not alone,—
No rampart shall sever thy bosom from mine,—
— Through battlement, turret, through prison and stone,
My spirit is free and is mingled with thine ! "

LXVI.

Wildly the oar with trembling hand she dips,—
More near the tower she bids her shallop dart :—
— Against the wall she presses her cold lips,
Seeming to drink the sound from every part
And feel the pulses of his prisoned heart
Beating through all the stones against her cheek !
— No voice or language can her thoughts impart,
To cling is all the language she can seek,—
To cling unto the stone,—and leave the Winds to
speak !

LXVII.

Her bright hair beating on the dungeon-wall,
Its gloom with many a golden shadow stains :
And as the beams of night upon her fall,
(Seeming to move the granite with its pains,)
Against the stone her fevered bosom strains,
Until the very adamant is warm,
As if its heart were shot with living veins.
There, like a wild-flower grey-blown by the storm,
Upon the frowning buttress hangs her trembling form !

LXVIII.

Again the strain arises through the night,
And o'er the cords of ocean weirdly thrown,
Amid the gales of winter wings its flight,—
Then deep into its dungeon fades the tone.
— Oh as that Music dies into the stone,
Her spirit seems to follow, searching through
The inmost darkness of the walls which groan
With density above her, and to view
E'en more than that wild Measure from their bosom
drew.

LXIX.

No further echo greets her ; lingering still,
 (As if she disengaged her from his breast,)
 She draws her backward, and the heavy rill
 Of waters by her bending oar caressed,
 Once more arises.—Brooding o'er her quest,—
 Thus mysticly and wonderfully crowned,
 With mingled joys and agonies possessed,
 Her yearning spirit sunk in thought profound,
 She passes onward thence, scarce heeding whither
 bound.

LXX.

That she will save or die !—behold the thought
 Which burns before her,—but oh ! whence her
 power ?—
 —Once more her slowly-drifting bark is brought
 Where Dietrich's cabin fronts the prison-tower.
 But as the caverned cliffs above her lower,
 Her eyes uplifted, suddenly descry
 A misty Form, beneath whose shadow cower
 The shrinking waters !—Turning not to fly,
 For yearning blank despair can fear no mystery,—

LXXI.

With placid gaze the maiden seeks to learn
 Who wanders thus upon these barren strands ?
 —That she is wild, majestic, mute and stern,
 Is all she views as in the skiff she stands ;
 So forth upon the shore she swiftly lands,
 And fearlessly advancing on the beach,
 With dauntless eye the phantom-shape commands.
 • —“Who art thou ? or what art thou ?—let thy speech
 Unfold to me thy spirit, and thy nature teach !—

LXXII.

“Thy face is veiled, and lonely is the shore ;—
 If thou art woman as myself, perchance
 Some mighty sorrow thou hast fled before,
 Seeking with ocean's murmur for entrance

That sorrow in oblivion !—let thy glance
Respond to mine,—I prithee lower thy veil ;—
Though wild the region, fear no evil chance,—
I am a woman with as deep a tale
Of woe as ever sought—for peace in ocean's wail !”

LXXIII.

Then silently the wanderer's mantle raised,
Revealeth all the maiden's questions seek ;—
Upon her in the light of ocean gazed
A Face from which she shrank with sudden shriek,—
And cowering downward, strove no more to speak !
—Convulsèd Inspiration's traces gave
Darkness to every line upon her cheek ;—
And as a crannied cliff looks on the wave,
Her hollow eyes and temples marked the waters lave ;

LXXIV.

Seeming to blast them with their awful shade,
E'en as a shattered rock's reflection thrown,
Like a spent thunder by the ocean stayed,
Hangs ever on the waves beneath it blown.
—Her bosom naked and with palsy strown,
Discloses flesh in which no blood is warm ;
And Rheingold's eye recalls the wild Unknown,
The Prophetess who on that night of storm
Appeared,—the Woman strange—in feature and in
form !

LXXV.

“ Woman of Silence and of Mystery !
Whence art thou come, with stern and pallid brow,
All hardened as the gaze of Destiny ?—
What is thy mission ?—speak !—what bearest thou ?
Once more unto thy voice mine ear I bow !”—
—“ Oh Rheingold ! daughter of the Erichswold !
By Heaven charged, I stand before thee now,—
With the last mission which I shall unfold,
And shall no more confront thee, when these things
are told !

LXXVI.

“The last and only further Messenger
 Whom Heaven’s future wisdom ordereth
 To bear thee tidings, oh thou Wanderer,—
 Will be the herald whom the world calls Death !
 But that is a vain word which counselleth
 The mind to falsity, and man should scorn
 To hold it in his language ;—for the breath
 Of this world being hushed, to Man is born
 A World in which the spirit’s—Inward Breath is
 drawn !

LXXVII.

“Where all the inward pulses of the soul
 Leap into outward life !—where every sense
 Is deeper and more infinitely whole !
 All feeling,—thought,—existence more intense
 Than they may dream who have not journeyed hence !
 —There shall thy tempest-driven wanderings cease,
 There shall the Love which was begotten thence,
 Within thee all its hidden depths release,
 And break around thee in—the Glory of its Peace !

LXXVIII.

“If oft the Wind in anger o’er thee swept,
It was the thing which *first* thy hand caressed
 When like a babe it on thy bosom slept !
 —Thou *first* didst love the Winds, and in their nest
 Sought shelter with them,—and the pillow pressed
 With thy fair head, on which they lay to sleep !
 They reared thee as a mother, and possessed
 Thy spirit with a wisdom rude but deep,—
 And taught thee how to love, in teaching thee to weep !

LXXIX.

“And as a mother leadeth forth her child
 To teach it in her garden,¹ even so
 The Winds did lead thee forth through forests wild !
 And bade thee follow them till thou shouldst know

¹ Should this metaphor appear somewhat strange, the reader must excuse it, as it was greatly suggested by remembrances of my own childhood.

A Mystery—a wonder they would show !
 —O'er giddy paths scarce trodden by the hinds,
 They led thee by the haunt of wolf and roe,
 To Him whose mystic Touch thy spirit binds !—
 Him whom thou *first* didst love—*more* deeply than the
 Winds !

LXXX.

"Thus tears and woes beget the Loves of Heaven !
 Could man conceive and grasp this mighty thing,
 He would not marvel that his woes are given !
 —For as the sunbeams soft with chastening,
 Which open through the broken showers of Spring,
 Filling with mossy odour all the air,—
 So is the Love which Heaven's Hand doth wring
 From out the depths of anguish and despair !
 As *Light* through *Dew*,—the Love—which renders
 Heaven fair !—

LXXXI.

"Say !—wouldst thou sooner with a soulless breast,
 Have died and revelled in thy pageant home ?"
 —"No !—no !" she cried,—*"I would no more of
 rest—*
Of this world's rest !—I feel within me some
Strange thirst for Love yet deeper,—I would roam—
I further through the forest yet would flee !—
—Oh Heaven ! would the living days were come,
When this great world—all things on earth and sea—
Shall learn the Love which storms and winds have
wrought in me !

LXXXII.

"—I further through the Forest yet would ride !—
But speak,—oh answer,—must I ride alone ?
—Does heaven, earth, my heart,—vast ocean hide
No power which may move yon sullen stone ?"—
"I come," the Woman answered, "to make known
Somewhat of hidden Destiny's decree.
—Thy fate—thy Life and his are cast as one
In this world and eternity ;—but ye
Through trials must become the thing which ye shall be !

LXXXIII.

Behold,—your lives pursue a rugged path.
 It may be,—and may not be,—that your foes
 Shall wholly triumph over ye.—The wrath
 Of Siegerfrid of Bergenfeld arose
 From thwarted cunning ; and more deeply grows
 From anger of defeated avarice,
 Than grief for her who battle's fortune chose,
 And sexless, wore dark manhood's red device.
 —Some power is thine, to stay the coming sacrifice.

LXXXIV.

“—This Blade of living steel and mystic hue,
 All things of brass and iron yield before.
 —Its essence from the Lightning's breath I drew,
 And wrought it power which no hidden ore
 Though drawn from out the earth's most inward
 core,
 Hath substance to withstand ;—within it lurks
 A germ of life so secret, that the lore
 Of Egypt knew it not !—and little irks
 The strength of iron to him, for whom its spirit works !”

LXXXV.

“And wilt thou this bestow ?” the maiden cried,
 “Great Ocean teach my heart some voice to bless !”
 —“It is my latter mission to confide
 This Talisman ;—no further and no less
 Is mine to give or utter,—so address
 Thy means to thy desire,—be love thy guide.
 I may no more of destiny confess ;—
 But heed that when thou hast its power applied,
 The talisman be cast beneath the ocean's tide !”

LXXXVI.

She gave the steel into the maiden's hand ;
 And as her eager grasp around it closed,
 Strange murmurs sank along the prison-strand !
 —“Great heaven thou hast heard me, and reposed

Thy strength in my weak hand !—were worlds opposed,
I now could strive !—but,—if he with me fly,
Will he survive,—his refuge undisclosed ?—
Oh will he live ?—speak !”——“ Do men ever die ?”—
The Woman said and vanished 'neath the winter-sky.

LXXXVII.

Somewhile alone she stood upon the shore,
Marking the silver haze which from the wave
Rose slanting o'er the castle-walls.—No more
Her glance was mute despair, but seemed to crave
For speedy morning-light.—Her schemes to save
Were swiftly fashioned in the brain of Love !
One long deep gaze the castle shore she gave,
Then turning, slowly bent her to the cove
In which the crazy cabin with the north-wind strove.

LXXXVIII.

But as before the door she glanced around ;
Again, ere yet she sought her troubled sleep,
Full many a weird and lowly-stealing sound
Along the sunken waters seemed to creep,
And mazy measures filled the murmuring deep :
Whilst from a cloud descending, a long dew
In vision did the distant castle steep,
Till floating in an ether weirdly blue,
As from some ghostly world, the heightened turrets
grew.

LXXXIX.

For 'neath these pale and barren seas there lay
Full many a mermaid's grot and naiad-dell ;
And on the billows rose the water-fay
To rock the wooden cabin with her spell,

In which the maiden slumbered.—Strangely fell
 Along the folds of ocean tone on tone
 Which seemed the Secret of the Sea¹ to tell !
 —And on the gale was reedy music strown,
 As when the satyrs dance to Pan's wild monotone.

¹ —“Which seemed the Secret of the Sea to tell !”—The exquisite ballad of the immortal Longfellow to which this line refers, possesses for me a charm I could not possibly describe. It is hardly likely it can be unknown to the reader, but as the immediate contemplation of it will better set forth the spirit and meaning of the above line, I here insert it at length.

THE SECRET OF THE SEA.

Ah ! what pleasant visions haunt me,
 As I gaze upon the sea !
 All the old romantic legends,
 All my dreams come back to me.

Sails of silk and ropes of sendal,
 Such as gleam in ancient lore ;
 And the singing of the sailors,
 And the answer from the shore !

Most of all, the Spanish ballad
 Haunts me oft and tarries long,
 Of the noble Count Arnaldos
 And the sailor's mystic song.

Like the long waves on a sea-beach,
 Where the sand as silver shines,
 With a soft, monotonous cadence,
 Flow its unrhymed lyric lines ;

Telling how the Count Arnaldos,
 With his hawk upon his hand,
 Saw a fair and stately galley,
 Steering onward to the land ;—

How he heard the ancient helmsman
 Chant a song so wild and clear,
 That the sailing sea-bird slowly
 Poised upon the mast to hear,

Till his soul was full of longing,
 And he cried, with impulse strong,—
 “ Helmsman ! for the love of heaven,
 Teach me, too, that wondrous song !”

“ Wouldst thou,”—so the helmsman answered,
 “ Learn the secret of the sea ?
 Only those who brave its dangers
 Comprehend its mystery !”

XC.

At length the maiden lay her down and slept,
 Then deeper, closer round the cabin drew
 The misty throngs which o'er the waters swept.
 From breeze to breeze melodious voices flew,
 And whispered notes hung limpid on the dew !—
 From cloud to wave a floating beam did reach,
 And liquid flutings through the ripples blew,
 Falling like grotto-bells upon the beach !
 Thus to the Night the Mermaids did their music teach.

SONG OF THE MERMAIDS.

I.

We are but Winds !—we fled from shore to shore
 Shapeless and mighty as our parent-storms,—
 And knew no burden save the clouds we bore,
 Until our Master prisoned us in forms !

II.

Broadly we blew on ocean and on strand,
 Beyond all death,—beyond all earth's controls,—
 Living as tempests live,—till Heaven's hand
 Created forms, and bade us be their souls !

III.

So we are Winds embodied,—prisoned songs,—
 Which ever mourning move along the breeze !
 —Beneath half-clouded moons depart our throngs
 O'er desert waters,—leaden-lighted seas.

IV.

With us to sing alone can be to live ;—
 But when in song some fleeting years are o'er,
 Our bodies to the elements we give,
 And bodiless and free, are Winds once more !

In each sail that skims the horizon,
 In each landward-blowing breeze,
 I behold that stately galley,
 Hear those mournful melodies ;

Till my soul is full of longing
 For the secret of the sea,
 And the heart of the great ocean
 Sends a thrilling pulse through me.

V.

When dreams the wandering mariner enslave,
And o'er his prow the broken eddies wreath ;
High from the summit of the curling wave,
On winding horns of pearl our songs we breathe.

VI.

Pure as the blue of ocean is the sound
Which mellowing flows from out our horns of pearl ;
Beneath it's tone the waters break around
In many a purple rush and golden whirl.

VII.

There is an ever-murmuring world which lies ¹
Within the bosom of each ocean-shell,—
The children of the earth with sparkling eyes,
Delight to listen to its mazy spell :—

VIII.

It is a world of us and of our song,—
Deep-hidden in that endless tone we dwell !
And he who to that murmur harkened long,
Would gather Things he would not live to tell !

IX.

'Mid southern seas, leant o'er the vessel-side
A blue-eyed sailor, fair and yellow-tressed !
—We threw our arms along the rushing tide,
And rocked his ship in music, till his breast

X.

Was filled with Love which only lives in winds !
—His glance with Light which lives but in the sea !
—His soul with Thought no earthy bosom finds,—
—His heart with Joys which mortal may not be !

XI.

His yellow locks where tender billows rise,
Are floating onward with the summer-beams ;
—Rich is the purple wave—his deep blue eyes
Are mingled with the ocean and its dreams !

¹ The peculiar rushing sound heard within a shell.

XII.

Though loves and passions have within us dwelt
Which might the bosom of great Ocean swell,—
—Though feeling more than mortals ever felt,—
To sing and mourn is all that we may tell !

XIII.

For to sing and mourn and die
Is of Winds the destiny !
And we only are a wind
In a living shape confined !
—So, our bodies on the shore
Fade, and we are winds once more !—
But it is in memory
Of the loves we felt and knew,
In the days that mystery
Did with shape our life endue,
—That we mourn along the earth !
—That we scatter Autumn-leaves !
—That we give the tempest birth !
—That our path where'er it cleaves
Never resting-place receives !

MERMAIDS.

But whence are Ye dark Spirits of the main ?
Whose forms along the blast like thunder driven,
Upon the heights of earth bid tempest reign,
And with your awful shadows menace heaven ?
By the looks Ye cast on Space
Ye are kindred of our race !

SONG OF THE WIND-SPIRITS.

As the morning woke the land,
We from Afric's ruddy strand
Scattered on the red simoon,
Through the upper ether sped ;—
And we fanned the waning moon
With our pinions as we fled !
And our glossy wings around her
In a gauzy curtain spread,
Causing twilight in her mountains,
O'er her seas and mighty fountains !
And with many a song of wonder
Lulled her on her cloudy bed.

Swiftly and invisibly
 We encompass earth and sea,
 Yet we are not wholly free !
 Though above the earth and ocean
 Trackless and unseen we pass,—
 Yet the cunning arts of man
 Prison us in wood and brass,—
 And in subtle shapes confine us,—
 And in subtle tones combine us !
 Until he hath wrung from out us
 Things we deemed to him forbidden,—
 All the Treasures the Eternal
 Hath within our bosoms hidden !
 —Till we prove as forth we range,
 Many a wild and sudden change !

A SPIRIT.

A Lover breathed me on her lute,
 Opening her soul in me !
 And I floated with her song
 To a youth as fair as she,—
 Breathing thus her spirit o'er him !
 —But he heeded not the strain.—
 Lonely, I resought the maiden,
 But I sought her songs in vain !
 —They were hushed,—though she was fairer—
 Stranger—fairer than before,—
 But it was a silent fairness,
 And her melodies were o'er !
 Her sweet spirit had departed,
 And could breathe in me no more !
 —As she slumbers, oft I hover
 In the willow-boughs above her !

OTHER SPIRITS.

We were blown from out a trump,
 To hail a tyrant as he entered
 Through a conquered city's portal,
 Where a nation's heart was centred.
 There we kissed his hem of purple,
 As the pageants fed his view :—
 At eve we fanned the golden tissues
 Of his banners as they blew,—
 At morn we fanned the pallid temples
 Of a captive whom he slew !

Good and evil ever blending,
 Thus our courses intercept ;—
 With the breath we 'whelmed a sailor,
 Have we lulled his babe who slept !
 —With the breath we fanned a grave,
 Dried the tears of those who wept !
 Thus all paths and places human
 By our hidden forms are trod,—
 Than our passage is there nothing
 Swifter, save the Eye of God.
 He beholds ere we can touch
 All that man hath executed,—
 He beholds before us and
 Is tortured—ere *we* are polluted !

MERMAIDS.

And whence are Ye? around whose path of storms,
 The hissing floods arise in serpent-forms
 Shooting their venom at the withered cloud !
 Oh whence are Ye with features tempest-browed ?

SPIRITS OF THE DEEP.

From the oceans which lie in the centre of earth,
 Where the mammoth of old and the dolphin had birth !
 Where mountains unrisen are shaped in her womb !
 —Where the long-buried city lies deep in its tomb,—
 Its streets and its palaces thronged with the dead ;—
 Above them a night of eternity spread,—
 For the caverns of earth in a firmament rise
 Forming their sunless and pitiless skies !
 The palace is standing, the columns are whole,
 Amid them the earthquakes far-murmuring roll !
 —The King on his throne with his sceptre and crown,
 But fleshless his brow and departed his frown.
 No more can his eyes flash with conquest or ire,
 Though above them the ruby yet kindles in fire,—
 And about his bare temples the circling gem
 Mocks the cold skull with a diadem !
 For the worm now looks forth from the dim hollow caves
 Whence his dark flashing eyes beheld empires his slaves !
 —Before him the skeleton-revellers throng,
 But mute are their lips and forgotten their song ;—
 Oh sightless their glances and loathsome the feast,
 Their jest is no more and their laughter hath ceased ;
 But the King on his throne still with homage they greet,
 —Bone by bone they drop down at their sovereign's feet !

All is silent, no wind with its freshening breath
Ever scatters the echos, and stagnant and grey
Is the light which illumines the Cities of Death,—
The empires forgotten which slumber in clay !
—Thus Sodom,—Gomorrah,—the Realms of the Plain
With their Kings and their Darkness in solitude reign !

MERMAIDS.

But whence are Ye soft spirits of the main ?
Whose forms along the breeze like roses driven,
Upon the heights of earth bid Morning reign,
And with an infant's brightness kindle heaven ?

SONG OF THE NAIADS.

From the hidden Southern Isles,
Land no human step defiles ;
Where the brooding summer-sea
Rolls in dark blue luxury
Through the rosy crystal caves
Piled in arches o'er the waves !
Domes of jacinth, pearl and sapphire
O'er the flashing currents glow,
And the liquid shades of rubies
With the molten waters flow.
Topaz, beryl, chrysolite
Shed a more than mortal light ;
And the violet amethyst
Mellowing the ocean's mist,
Warmly kindles,—all the dews
Throbbing with its tinted hues.
—Whilst the lonely palms look downward
With a placid mystery,
O'er the seas which open outward
In their dim eternity !
Purpling ether with their odours,
Groves of orange and of citron
Tinge the air with endless autumn !—
—Fragrance of the rich musk-melon
And the red full-hearted rose,
Every fruit and every flower
Which those Southern Isles disclose,
—All the perfumes of the vale
Melting in the languid gale,
Fill the ether with a slumber—
With a nameless sleep which mortals
Know but once,—and then for ever !

MERMAIDS.

Upon this shore there rests a mourner,
On her tears the moonbeams fall,—
Though her eyes are bound in slumber,
Sleep cannot her tears enthrall !—
In yon prison lies a watcher ;
And as beams from clouds descending,
Memories on his spirit fall !
Though his chain confines the Present—
Stone cannot the Past enthrall !
Wake !—arise and gather Spirits !
Rock yon prison with your song !
—By the couch of the Oppressor
Dreams of Guilt and visioned Wrong
Waken !—torture him who tortures,
But around the tortured pour
Things which we alone can conjure !
With your music linger o'er
Him who watches in the prison,—
She who slumbers on the shore !

END OF CANTO VII.

CANTO VIII.

*ROTHKÄPPCHEN*¹

I.

So all the night they sang, till upward drawn,
 The mists above them rose ; then forth they sped
 Until their pinions mingled with the dawn,—
 And o'er the tide in drifting circle spread,
 To Southern Seas their hidden journey led.
 —Slowly the waters move beneath the wind,
 As if they yielded to a spirit's tread ;
 And as a wreath by maiden-touch entwined,
 Soft gales the brow of Morn as with a chaplet bind.

II.

So tenderly it falls on stream and cave,
 Dissolving into water Light appears !
 As if the cloud were melting to a wave,
 The sea drew heaven down in golden tears.
 Above the glistening brine the bittern steers,
 And plunging, shrilly greets the rising sun.
 Once more the stony face of Winter clears ;
 His icy hand relaxes,—one by one
 Warm gales return, and warmly Adria's channels run.

III.

Arisen from her cabin is the maid.
 Within her freighted bark, in which her hand
 Long-toiling, hath the woody cargo laid,—
 Once more she pauses by the morning-strand.

¹ The German for " Red Riding-Hood."

—Her locks confined within a narrow band
 And shrouded with her face beneath her hood,
 She slowly pulls her shallop from the land ;
 And holds her course upon the beaming flood,
 Whilst trembling passion struggles in her fevered
 blood.

IV.

For lest she should encounter any eyes
 To whom perchance her face were unforget,
 She hath arrayed her form in such disguise
 As in the turmoil of her hurried plot,
 From out her thoughts she could devise ; but not
 A mask which might withstand all scrutiny.
 Her course is wild and troubled as her lot,
 But 'tis the course of last extremity,—
 The final stage which crowns her life of mystery.

V.

—“The morn is fair, and Ocean fair art thou ;—
 My old companion with thee I depart
 Upon my mighty cause,—be with me now !
 Thy bosom beats beneath me with a heart
 Which is no stranger,—but will bear my part,
¹ And all thy pulses leap with love to me !
 —Companion of my tears and hopes thou art,—
 And much *his spirit* seems to lurk in thee,—
 As thou dost lave yon walls,—*He* fills thee, mighty Sea !

VI.

“Oh ! as thy mists unto the turrets rise,
 The purple shades which from the castle glide,
 Seem as the shades which looked from his dear
 eyes !
 —Those grey sweet glances can no prison hide,—
 The shadow of his brow floats on thy tide !
 And thou art full of his deep lingering gaze !
 Ocean,—thou hast his *gaze*—so be my guide,—
 Oh while thou canst *that glance* upon me raise,
 I cannot doubt thee, for—*His* glance—it ne'er betrays !

¹ The sea was the companion of my very early days, and might I utter
 all I feel in it, “I could a tale unfold.”—

VII.

"And more,—his Touch—his Touch is everywhere,—
His spirit roams the waters unconfined,
His touch I feel in ocean, earth and air !
—Oh ! as the matin-gales my temples bind,
Romont—thy dear hand wanders in the wind !
And as thy bosom rising to my cheek,
Is the warm flow of morning !—I will find
From out my helpless love the power I seek,
I feel the strength of Ocean—in that I am weak !

VIII.

"For as I slept, sweet songs did fill my sleep ;
And in my slumber oft I seemed to stray
Through mighty regions,—caverns of the deep,
Where ocean-spirits led me on my way ;—
Where as the sleeping waters folded lay
On banks of mystic flowers to earth unknown,
Methought they seemed so soft and blue-grey—
Too tender for the touch of prison-stone,—
I wept that they should on such bitter shores be thrown !

IX.

"But hence all tears !—lead on ye Winds once more !
I feel that our last journey we behold—
And soon our stormy travel shall be o'er !
—Still as the castle-shadows o'er me fold,
Still—still within them seem the shades of old—
Of thy grey loving eyes to cover me !
—Although the walls are steep and dense and cold,
The more I enter them—(though stern they be,—)
I cannot tremble, for—I seem to enter *Thee* !"—

X.

At length amid the turrets dimly shown,
A quay with steps descending, meets her eye ;
With rings of iron wedged into the stone,
To moor the fishers' barks which thither ply.

Around it sundry skiffs at anchor lie.
 Here, leaning o'er the dusky parapet,
 A sturdy hooded form she can descry.
 To this her eager course is swiftly set ;—
 A moment flies,—her shallop and the shore have met.

XI.

But as the eddies bore her to the quay ;
 The form she marked upon the rocky stair
 Far gazing outward o'er the morning sea,
 Beholding her amid the waters' glare ;
 Descending, cried with rudely-wondering air ;—
 " St. Anthony !—have we Rothkäppchen here ?
 Who art thou child, so hooded and so fair ?—
 Who taught thy hand so bravely thus to steer ?—
 Who sent thee forth to seek these ramparts dark and
 drear ?"

XII.

" I am the woodman's daughter," she replied ;
 " My father bade me hither hie this morn,
 And bear his burden for him o'er the tide."—
 —" Now would" he answered, " I were shaved and
 shorn,
 To be as good monks be !—no gaoler born,—
 —'Tis well to see the sun upon thee rise,—
 St. Anthony ! I ne'er knew *such* a dawn !
 'Tis well that thou art come, my wearied eyes
 Do seldom find a wench, in this poor paradise !"

XIII.

" When hither come, my father bade me seek
 The gaoler Biterolf ;—who art thou Sir ?"—
 " I am no else than he, so prithee speak
 Thine errand ;—woman's voice doth rarely stir
 These stony echoes,—when I meet with her,
 I fain would nothing of her errand miss !"
 —" My charge is told," replied the wanderer,
 Than that which I have said, no more I wis."—
 —" And have those lips for me, no message saving
 this ?"

XIV.

"Then let me aid thee 'lighten from thy skiff,
And help thee with thy fagots pretty dame."
—"Good Master, I have clambered rock and cliff
For many a merry day ;—but wouldst thou claim
To help me with my fagots, it were shame
To say thee nay for this thy gentleness ;—
So, goodly Master, be our task the same."
—"St. Jude ! thou hast a tongue of tenderness !
This morn the saints are jovial, and disposed to bless."

XV.

He grasped her hand,—she 'lighted from the skiff ;
But as her foot descended, strangely shed,
A pallor o'er her fell,—she shrank as if
She trod upon a snake !—"Fair wench," he said,
"Though dark the ramparts, thou hast naught to
dread."
—Oh as he uttered this, could he have known
How all the granite *lived* beneath her tread,
As if she felt a heart beat in the stone !—
So throbbed it to her footfall !—but to hers alone.

XVI.

"I fear them not, nor does their gloom affright ;
But at the instant darted through my brain
A memory of things which yester-night
My father told,—things terrible,—I fain
Had never known within my thoughts again.
—The pity unto woman's nature wed,
In truth amid such mighty towers is vain !
—They say 'tis justice,—but with Ocean spread
Around them, could their lips—no milder justice
shed !"

XVII.

"Forsooth I know but little of the tale !
Save that the youth is given to my care
Till Church's holy sentence shall prevail ;"—
The gaoler answered, with a heedless air

Of all save her who did his converse share.
 —“And is all hope,” she cried, “of pardon o’er?”—
 “Now by the holy Mass,—the wench is fair,—
 Fair as the blessed babe my Margery bore ;
 Which laughed at the blue sea, and died upon this
 shore !

XVIII.

“But let us lift thy fagots pretty dame,—
 My young Rothkäppchen fresh from out the wood !
 Fear not,—I am no wolf ;—no tongue would blame
 Or dare to blame, if very chance, I should
 In conquering a wench yet prove me good !
 —To yonder terrace looking o’er the sea,
 Now follow me Rothkäppchen !—by the Rood !
 I have a stoup of most right Burgundy,—
 There shalt thou tell me much, and I—will answer
 thee !”

XIX.

Then gather they the fagots pile by pile,
 And turn them from the platform to ascend,
 When suddenly the guard in long defile
 From out a postern issuing, thither tend
 Their course, until their burnished ranks extend
 Along a nether rampart.—“Halt !—what ho !—
 Who shares thy dainty gossip gentle friend ?”
 The Captain cries to Biterolf below.—
 “This way wench with thy wood !—and speed thee,—
 thou art slow !”

XX.

These words he only utters, till he gains
 The rampart, then (the Captain drawing near,)
 With mock fatigue his panting answer strains ;—
 “How now ?—thou spurred and crested chanticleer !
 What wouldst thou with me prithee ?—Seest not here
 That I am burdened ?—grieved for breath ?—and
 drawn
 E’en as a hunchback, but must lend thy cheer ?
 —Go !—prattle with thy trumpets to the morn !—
 And vex not old men toiling, thou unruly born.”

XXI.

"Enough Sir Honesty!" the Captain cried,
" 'Twas but a stranger's voice my hearing caught ;
I did not mark the wood-girl at thy side,
Or I had not thy churlish lips besought.
—I fain to thee some gentler mood had taught,
But that my duty calls me to patrol.—
—I yet may find some moment to exhort
More courtesies from out thy tender soul."—
Thus saying, he bids the guard no more their speed
control.

XXII.

The troopers through a wide portcullis-gate,
Pass onward with the flash of crest and blade.
—"This way wench with thy wood!—the fiends
belate
Yon windy brawler and his faronade !
—But give them little heed my pretty maid,—
For we will hie us to our Burgundy !
And thou shalt have thy journey hither paid
With things most fit I ween for such as thee !—
Red wine,—red smiles, and all—sweet gossip draws
from ye !"

XXIII.

So upward to the terrace they ascend.
And struggling with her terror, hope and fear,
Sustained by clinging to her mighty end,
She here betook her with him to his cheer ;—
To all his drunken jestings lent her ear,
Suffered his brutal kiss, his gross embrace,
And made mock laughter in her eyes appear ;
Nor let her blushing cheek give outward trace
Of *that* within her heart, which hallowed all the place !

XXIV.

His bumper full she held with cunning hand ;
But oft the blue and winter-wreathed sky
With eye as blue as wild the maiden scanned.
And as,—(its mighty mourning vanished by,—

Refreshed with tears the ocean seemed to lie,
 A flock of snowy birds, like blossom driven
 Down-shooting,—whitely scattered from on high,—
 Along the breeze in drifting circle riven,
 Fell like a garland broken from the brow of heaven !

XXV.

The gaoler's drunken senses passed ; until
 His touch had strength no longer to pollute.
 —Around there seemed to float in every rill
 The murmur of a Siren's airy flute ;
 And far beneath them, as the winds lay mute,
 The waters beat such throbbing melody,
 As if the waves were tangled in a lute,
 Struggling amid the chords for liberty,—
 So softly broken fell—the voices of the sea !

XXVI.

But suddenly within his ear she spake ;—
 —“ What lies within yon tower ? against whose side
 The waves yet loudly and yet fiercely break,
 Although the sea is calm,—the winds have died !
 —Yon grating scarcely rises o'er the tide.”—
 —“ The gentle youth whose death the priest did
 sign,”—
 With hoarsely-drunken voice the gaoler cried,
 —“ Who on the morrow dies !—St. Mary mine !
 They'd better let him live,—or drown in Rhenish
 wine !”

XXVII.

“ Is not the dungeon dank and chill ? ” she said.
 “ Aye, dank and chill and piercing to the bone
 Of him who on its floor doth make his bed.—
 The water often oozes through the stone,
 And water is most hateful—when alone ! ”
 —“ Oh dost thou ever kindle fire to cheer
 The captive there ? or is such deed unknown
 To those whose justice hath dominion here ?
 Awaits he in privation, the deliverance near ? ”—

XXVIII.

"Now art thou full of pity as thou'rt fair!"
The gaoler answered, "they are not so stern,
But that it is allotted to my care
To grant him fire and food; and oft I earn
Rebuke for pitying when I should spurn.
—Such mercy still doth suit their holy pleasure.
'Tis now the hour when I should thither turn,
And with my hands his daily pittance measure,—
But wine is red,—thou'rt fair,—and he must wait my
leisure!"

XXIX.

"Yet one more kiss!—my fever quickeneth!—
Oh take me to thy lips and cool my thirst;
I pray thee quench my fever in thy breath!"
—No more his hand her mock caresses nursed,
But as he spake, with sudden strength she burst
The clinging fetters of his ruffian hold;—
—"I grant thee all thy wish," she cried, "but first
Hence to thy captive!—selfish as thou'rt old!—
Until his wants are answered,—I the boon withhold!"

XXX.

"If it be even so my forest-queen,
I fain must please thee and obey thy word.
—But,—I am charged with years,—and I must
lean
Upon some fair support,—so thou my bird!
Shalt go with me;—for, if my footstep erred,
The burden of much age my daughter,—might
So overcome me—I should sink!—I stirred
Abroad this morn too early,—would 'twere night—
Oh I am blind with age,—but thou shalt be my sight!"

XXXI.

"Yet harken wench!—it is forbidden me
To suffer any with me where I go;—
And wert thou seen, thy punishment would be
Some lengthened days' imprisonment below,

And I the stocks for some few hours should know.
 But I can lead thee by a secret way,
 In which we shall the peril most forego.—
 —I am too old to walk unaided,—say,—
 Dost fear to brave the danger?—wilt thou give me
 nay?”

XXXII.

“I come!” she answered, “and I have no fear!”
 —“’Tis well,—’tis well,—so carry thou the wood,
 To light the dungeon-fire.—Remain thou here
 Whilst I go seek the prisoner his food ;—
 Move not, lest thou shouldst meet the Captain’s
 brood,
 —Give me the flagon,—that will I refill.”—
 Thus saying, he departs.—Transfixed she stood ;—
 Bewildered,—mad,—but o’er the ocean’s rill
 The light winds moved,—she felt—that *they* would
 lead her still !

XXXIII.

So forth they sped when Biterolf returned.
 —Their forms the widely-gaping arches rear,
 As if they o’er her path in pity yearned.
 —She feels *his* heart beat nearer and more near !
 —So full—so full of him all things appear,—
 She trembles at the touch of every stone !
 —Through winding gloom they passed ;—deep-
 sunken here
 Beneath the waves, where Echo’s vaulted groan
 Rang with the sounding ocean’s cavernous monotone,

XXXIV.

Until they seemed to walk the Ocean’s halls.—
 —Long was the way. At length an iron door
 Arrested them between the narrowing walls.
 An instant grated through the water’s roar
 The lock, and this opposed their path no more.
 —Oh then from out the dungeon thus revealed,
 From out the gloom—a fair sweet light fell o’er
 The hardened stones,—along them slowly stealed
 As the white beam of morning o’er a drowsy field !

XXXV.

Whence was the light?—that radiance softly fair
Which with the darkness of the dungeon strove,
As if some beam of dawn was prisoned there?
—Whence came the Light which o'er the ether wove
A *Peace* like early morning in the grove?—
—A sleeping form concentrated that wild ray!
Oh fair was Romont—in his brow of love
There seemed a mother's presence as he lay,—
It, slumbering, seemed to shed—that radiance softly
grey!

XXXVI.

His wavy hair was sunlight!—O'er the stone
Made vivid by his dark black velvet guise,
The sleeping pallor of his visage shone!
—The gaoler passed.—The portal open lies;—
And Rheingold following, slowly thither hies
(E'en as a priest who entering veils his sight
When glory from the altar fills the eyes,—)
As through his closed lids, so greyly bright,
His spirit o'er her features sheds its inward light!

XXXVII.

Struggling to veil her thoughts and quell her heart,
She whispered;—"Wilt thou wake or let him sleep?"
The gaoler spake;—"I bear no evil part
To this fair youth, and truly fain would weep
(Had I less hate for water,) that they keep
Their bloody sentence of the coming day.
—But as I somewhat love his thanks to reap,
Such light commands as bid me not betray
Or violate my duty, I for him obey.

XXXVIII.

"It is his wont to slumber oft and long;
And he hath bid me never to awake
But let his dreaming last.—There is a song
Which sometime from his sleeping lips will break.

Its words my wondering ears could never take,
 But 'tis a music passing strange I trow,—
 A music which doth sad yet merry make,
 And which doth bring me dreams,—and which I vow
 I would have taught my babe,—had it been living
 now !

XXXIX.

“ But it I told thee, laughed at the blue sea !
 And died the sorry rogue, upon this shore.
 He wakens not ; so let his slumbers be,
 But let us kindle fire, the fagot's roar
 Will cheer his sleep and make his dreams the more.”
 —Yet battling, as if within her breast
 Great Ocean's heart were beating ;—from the door
 She brought the wood and with the labour pressed ;
 Whilst on a bench of stone, the gaoler sought his rest.

XL.

Upon the rugged hearth a flame arose
 Which redly glimmered through the dungeon's haze.
 The gaoler roused him from his brief repose,
 And sat him by her side before the blaze.
 Once more his hands the chargèd flagon raise ;
 —Addressing her in accents hoarse with wine,
 Once more he lifted thence his drunken gaze.
 “ Soh ! now fulfil thy pledge sweet lady mine !
 The fair discharge of duty,—now the task is thine !”

XLI.

Then stifling the fever of her brain,
 Again she lulled him with her mock caress ;
 But charged his bumper ever and again,
 And made his willing lips the flagon press,
 Till every moment was he waking less.
 Within her aching thoughts arose the while,
 Scheme upon scheme in dark confusèdness ;
 Wildly she pondered 'neath her struggling smile,
 And measured every stone amid the grated pile.

XLII.

It was a narrow cell ; within the wall
 An ample orifice let in the day,
 But bars of iron shut their barbèd thrall
 Between the captive's eye and ocean's spray,
 (Which nearly level with the grating lay,—)
 And lengthened in the sun, their shadows ran
 As if to chain the waters of the bay.
 With such cruel cunning had the artisan
 Knit stone with iron, in vain, might struggling free-
 dom plan.

XLIII.

Still Romont slumbered ; and it came to pass
 That more and more the gaoler's reason shrank.
 From out her lips and from the brimming glass
 Intoxicating fire his bosom drank :
 His heart more full, his troubled brain more blank
 At every kiss,—at every bumper grew,
 Until at length in drunken sleep he sank ;—
 And she alone remained !—as lightning through
 Her heated veins the sense—of hope—of triumph flew !

XLIV.

Trembling, she slowly drew her to the side
 Of him—of him who slumbered in his chain !
 Oh as his gentle breath around her sighed,
 Her spirit seemed to breathe the woods again !
 —The shadows of the grove around him reign,
 And breezy odours from his wavy brow
 Seem blown upon her !—Suddenly the strain,—
 The strain in which they mingled vow for vow,
 Broke from his sleeping lips, like murmurs from a
 bough !

“ Though fortress and rampart encompass me Love,
 With thee and the Songs of the Forest I rove !
 —Though battlements hide me, thou art not alone,
 No rampart shall sever thy bosom from mine,—
 Through battlement, turret, through prison and stone
 My spirit is free and is mingled with thine !”

XLV.

As if his Spirit (whilst his body slept,)
 Had passed from out his form to gaze on her,
 And now returned,—e'en so the music crept
 From out his lips to greet the Wanderer
 And now beneath them died !—She felt him stir,
 Yet trembled to behold his eyes unsealed :—
 So did the Spirit of the slumberer
 Look through the closed lids as thus she kneeled,
 She yearns yet dreads to meet—that spirit more re-
 vealed !

XLVI.

But suddenly the lashes slowly part,—
 And through the haze of sleep his tender eye
 Blue with the light of dreams, looked forth !—a
 start,—
 —And from his opening lips a stifled cry,—
 Then hushed, he contemplates the mystery,
 As if *she* were a portion of his sleep !
 —“What World is this ?” he cried, “so hushed and
 deep !
 What World like heaven rises,—and—yet seems to weep ?

XLVII.

“What unknown shore of dim Eternity ?—
 —Oh Rheingold !—answer !—touch me !—is it
 death ?”—
 —With quivering hand she pointed silently
 To Biterolf whose thickly heaving breath
 Declared it earth.—“O peace !” she murmureth,
 —“In mystery we met,—in mystery still
 While this dark world our fate o'ershadoweth,
 Must we the measure of that Fate fulfil,—
 And prove the strange ordeal—set by Heaven's will !

XLVIII.

“—But thou didst deem thyself in Spirit-Land
 And didst not fear me ?—am I *pure* to thee ?
 Speak,—Romont,—(wert thou on the Spirit-Strand,)
 Oh !—*wouldst thou bid me touch thee ?*—answer
 me !”—

“Though all,” he cried, “is dark and mystery,—
 —*Thou—Rheingold—thou art known—and clear to*
read!
 (Had Heaven yet denied thy history,)—
 But That is veiled no longer!—I have need
 No more of priestly tongues to teach me heaven’s creed!

XLIX.

“—Hast thou remembrance of the Lake of Sighs,—
 And of the Legend by the fishers told,
 Of Land which hidden in its centre lies?—
 —There did I wander,—there did they unfold
 To me thy destiny oh Rheinègold!—
 —Before the sun again shall meet the west,
 We shall the latter scene of earth behold!—
 —I feel thy lips have tidings unconfessed,—
 So speak!—but lay thy hand—the while upon my
 breast!”—

L.

Then with her touch she made their spirits one,
 And his warm bosom pillowed her cold hand!
 —They felt their troubled course was nearly done,
 That soon the Day would rise on other land.
 —In words as hurried as she could command,
 She told the virtue of the talisman,—
 And how she dwelt upon the further strand,
 And yet would tear him from the power of man,
 But fearfully her eyes—the sleeping gaoler scan.

LI.

“This night!” so ran her latter words, “I come!
 When darkness shrouds the wave, beneath this tower,
 Within my bark to bear thee to my home!
 —Be thou prepared to fly with me that hour,
 —Thy prison-bars will yield before the power
 Which hidden lies within the mystic steel!
 —Now be as if in slumber!—I must cower
 With mock caress beside this man!—and seal
 Our plot,—let not thy mood,—thy features aught re-
 veal!”

LII.

Oh wild was their farewell !—and wildly lay
 The shadow of their coming destiny
 Upon them as they parted !—but the Day
 Was opening o'er them !—and the mockery,—
 The fears,—the doubts of this world's fantasy,
 Were fading in the Light which yet shall fill
 The eyes of Man ! till they read faithfully
 The Mystery of mingled Good and Ill !—
 —For those who *watch* and *love*,—oh fair is Heaven's
 Will !

LIII.

So back she drew her to the gaoler's side,
 And roughly called him from his drunken rest !
 But lulled him with her smile, and was his guide
 In that for which his brain with wine oppressed,
 No more was equal.—She the fagots dressed,
 And spread the food before the blaze, and spoke
 All things which might his waking thought arrest :
 Until at length his prisoner awoke,
 And then the slavish churl his drowsy torpor broke.

LIV.

No sign, at least no token that his eye
 Could penetrate, did either face disclose ;
 For all save her he glanced unheeded by.
 At last his duties ended, he arose,
 Exclaiming ;—"Wench ! a fairer morning blows
 Upon the rampart than within this den !
 So hence, for I am old and need repose."
 —He drew her forth,—shot back the bolt, and then
 She followed ;—she could mock—at prisons and at
 men.

LV.

Somewhile upon the terrace whence they came,
 She tarried with the dotard, till her eyes
 Were weary of him.—"So, my pretty dame,
 Rothkäppchen thou wilt come again ?" he cries.

—She sailed away beneath the cloudy skies,
 And left him muttering in a mood forlorn :
 —“’Twas well to see the sun upon her rise !—
 ’Tis well to meet a fair wench in the morn,—
 Now by the holy Mass, ne’er knew I *such* a dawn !”

* * * * *

LVI.

The night descended ;—driven in the gale,
 Long voices hurried o’er the winter-wood,—
 Battling and broken fled the distant wail
 As with the rush of hosts along the flood !
 —His sturdy form o’ercast with silent mood,
 Before the blaze which lit his cabin-door,
 Once more in sombre meditation stood
 The woodman Dietrich ; as his wife Gildore
 Prepared their evening meal from out her frugal store.

LVII.

The maiden sits before the flaming pine.
 A storm awakens in the howling west.
 Her features as a clouded lightning shine ;
 And wildly to her heart her hand she pressed
 As if the thunder smote upon her breast,
 Whene’er it crackling brake along the wood !
 “I ne’er have known such fear by thee confessed
 At storms !” Gildore exclaimed ; “come take thy food,
 The storm’s in heaven child, and heaven child is good.”

LVIII.

Old Dietrich lay upon a wolf’s rough hide.
 He knew she purposed to go forth that night
 To roam the forest as her wont ;—he sighed,
 For strange forebodings filled him,—and his sight
 Was dim with looking on her, and despite
 His love to see her hair blow in the gale,—
 He cried ;—“Oh Grete child !—the tempest’s flight
 Is loud ! and Grete, thou art sad and pale !
 Wilt thou this night go forth to roam by glen and
 dale ?”

LVIX.

"She was a Wanderer from a distant land!"—
 Was all she told,—he sought to know no more,—
 For as her wild young locks about him fanned,
 It seemed *his Youth* might be the Distant Shore
 Of which she spake!—Whate'er the hidden lore
 She feared to tell, he cared not,—from the Strand
 Of long-forgotten tears and loves of yore,—
 From out his Youth she seemed to come,—and stand
 Before him as a Wanderer—from *that* distant land!

LX.

But as that night did o'er the glen expand,
 He felt,—(he knew not why or whence the mood,)—
 She was *departing* to that Distant Land—
 To leave him lonely in the winter-wood!—
 His eyes looked on her from his great dark hood.
 —"Dost thou still love me *next the Winds?*" said he.
 —"Aye father!—next the Winds,—thou art so good!—
 But I must love the Winds e'en more than thee!—
 Would I might love thee most,—but *they* still call to
 me!"—

LXI.

He would have sought her mystery to reach;
 But as he strove for words which might dispel
 His silence, and respond to her wild speech,—
 Without the hut, along the beaten dell,
 The Winds did seem to answer her so well,
 He dare not speak or strive to add *his* word
 To *That* which they had uttered!—so there fell
 A very lingering silence as they heard
 That Answer!—save the fire—which crackled,—
 nothing stirred.

LXII.

In vain he long besought, (he dare not bid,)
 The maiden stay that night beneath his roof;
 Though oft had been her wont in darkness hid,
 To roam without his wonder or reproof,
 And make the midnight ring with Nickel's hoof.
 But strange forebodings filled him all the day;

In vain he put his reason to the proof,
That night he yearned for power to bid her stay.
—At length she rose and sought the stall where
Nickel lay.

LXIII.

Him saddled ; she to Dietrich bade farewell,
And rode away beneath the winter-wind,
Which, (as she vanished through the hollow-dell,)
Moaned darkly unto those she left behind,
As if they nevermore her path should find,—
A Path known only to the Winds and Her !
—“To Heaven’s keeping be the child resigned,”
Said Dietrich,—“Wife !—my beads,—strange echos
stir,
And I would tell my prayers—for our wild wanderer !

LXIV.

“—She is returning to the Distant Strand
From which she wandered, and no longer binds
Her arms around me,—yet I powerless stand :—
—But mark !—along the gale her soft hair winds
And beats farewell !—the storm its lustre blinds,—
—A last—long Light from out my youth doth shine !
—She loves me wife no longer next the Winds,—
She loves them *only*—and no more is mine !”—
“Aye ! husband !—by the glory—of St. Mary’s shrine !”

LXV.

Within that night a miracle was wrought.
Though heavy winter lay upon the land,—
(As if the gale had sudden summer brought,)
Upon the banks,—and in the boughs which fanned
The lonely glen in which the hut did stand,
The leaves of Spring brake forth while Nature slept,
As if beneath the stroke of fairy wand !
—For in the wood that night an old man wept,—
And all the flowers to cheer him, from their blossoms
crept !

LXVI.

So when he early rose at break of day,
He found the earth was green before his door !

Though all the land beyond was dark and grey,
 Though all except the glen was chill and hoar !
 The groves beyond their wonted aspect wore,
 The trees alone which round his cabin stood,
 As if with sudden Spring their verdure bore !
 —He felt the sign,—and in bewildered mood,
 Yet musing, further wandered, through the dusky wood.

LXVII.

And as he sped, with wondering eyes he found
 In every print which Nickel's hoof had made,
 The flowers had grown ! till through the forest
 wound
 A rosy trail !—half-waking, he essayed
 To follow in the track by bush and glade.
 By those warm footprints led,—he passed along,—
 Through Winter guided thus, the old man strayed ;—
 And as he passed his lips brake forth in song !
 And he was nevermore—beheld the woods among !

* * * * * *

CONCLUSION.

LXVIII.

Above the ocean's ridges whitely strown
 Beneath the hand of Winter, rose revealed
 A cloud, and from the cloud there fell a tone !
 —As when a tocsin's savage voice doth wield
 The shafts of sound,—that tone o'er ocean's field
 Struck from the iron hollow of the cloud,
 Fell shattered as upon a brazen shield !
 And Night bent lower beneath the tempest's shroud,
 Like Atlas with the world upon his shoulders bowed.

LXIX.

Then forth from the horizon greyly bound,
 Upon the ocean's naked bosom stole
 Low-rumoured sound with murmurs darkly wound,
 As when in vaulted aisle the organ's roll

Is broken by the death-bell's labouring toll.
—Each heavy wave above the Ocean's dead,
(As if it bore the burden of a soul,)
Upon its bosom bows its weary head ;—
And heaven yields beneath the Thunder's iron tread.

LXX.

Crushed in the surge the stony breakers rattle.
The sea with many a ridge of tempest lined,
E'en as a giant with bosom bared to battle,
Lies pale and naked to the driven wind.—
Its swollen waves like shrunk muscles bind
That bosom gnarled with livid strength !—but now,
The Storm no more in hollow darkness shrined,
Withers with icy touch the shrinking prow,
Whilst o'er their rugged chords, the thunders broadly
bow.

LXXI.

Swiftly from crag and cloud the lightning's breath
Leapt like a falchion drawn in Judgment's cause,
Rimming the massive gloom with radiant death !
For one wild moment seeming thus to pause
'Twixt Seen and Unseen Worlds—betwixt the laws
Of God and Time,—revealing unto man
The Eternal and the Secret of His Wars,—
The gaping gulph which Death alone may span,—
And things reveiled by night, ere mortal eye may scan !

LXXII.

In dark rebellion,—gnashing 'neath His Rod,—
Beneath the heaven's tempest-shattered dome,
Drunken with light—the Ocean turned on God !
Whilst bolt on bolt to its black heart struck home,
And seemed its jagged waves with lips of foam
To gnaw the chain which bound It to His Will !
Its hosts no more in wildered conflict roam,
But close in battle with high God !—until
Earth—Air—all Things aghast—around the strife
stand still !

LXXIII.

—Who rides along the battle-beaten shore ?
—Who comes with garments torn and bosom bare ?
Who mocks the world of waters in its roar ?
—Far through the reeking mist—the ocean's glare,
Her features pale and thin as lightning stare !
—Dashed from her courser's hoofs the echos flee,—
The rushing tempest seems her speed to share !
—Who spurs her maddened path unto the sea ?—
And cries ;—"Lead on Ye Winds !—lead on !—I
follow Ye !"

LXXIV.

'Tis Rheingold ;—"Onward !—to the beach !—the
beach !
—On Nickel !—on !—to tear him from their stone !
—This hour my hand the tempest shall o'er-reach,—
Between two hearts are thunders vainly thrown !
—I fear no storm or wave !—I—I alone—
With God and my brave bark this hour will wrest
My lord from out their hands !—let ocean groan,—
My heart beats louder and is mightiest !—
Love—Mighty Love can measure Ocean with his
breast !"

LXXV.

Down to the shore with maddened pace she hies !
—Oh any heart but woman's hushed would stand
Before the scene which pressed upon her eyes !
The waters dash the shingle to the land,
Crushing the granite on the brittle strand !—
—Crouched, with its foaming jaws all pale and riven
As if it sought to rend its Maker's Hand—
The Sea lay gnashing at the feet of Heaven,
Pressed like a hound at bay, before its Master driven !

LXXVI.

Over the beach she flies !—oh God ! what sight
Wrings from her panting lips the tortured cry ?
—The bark is lost,—the waters in their might
A rock have severed from the cliff on high

And dashed it on the skiff,—its fragments lie
 Buried or floating on the bitter tide.—
 —Then ocean seemed to shrink before her eye !
 —“ On Nickel !—thou canst stem the wave !” she
 cried,—

“ To him—or death (*which would be—unto him*) we ride !

LXXVII.

“ Strike with me Tempest !—Nature plead my part,—
 Be with me Ocean !—make my cause thine own !
 Awake !—let every pulse of thy great heart
 Now beat with mine against th’ accursèd stone !
 And prove what Love—what Love and thee alone
 Can tear from granite !—Ocean—I for ever
 Have watched and mourned with thee !—thy coun-
 sels known !
 —We are companions,—if my last hope wither—
 Ocean—at least our hearts—shall beat and break to-
 gether !”—

LXXVIII.

Oh well her old companion of the wood
 Leaps panting in the surge, and from his side
 Dashes in streams of light the riven flood !
 —He feels that her warm heart doth with him ride,
 And trembles not to bear it o’er the tide
 As bravely as the wood !—he fears no storm
 So that warm heart is with him as his guide !
 —In vain th’ opposing flood’s embattled form,
 Their waves are strong and *cold*—their hearts are strong
 and *warm* !

LXXIX.

Her garments stream like clouds upon the gale ;—
 —Soon—soon the dungeon-tower before them lies,—
 —As up the walls the jagged lightnings scale,
 His form—the grating riven she descries !
 All Ocean with her bosom seems to rise !
 —“ Beat through the waves my heart !—I come—I
 come !”
 On with the shrieking wind the courser hies,—
 Until their shapes amid the struggling foam,
 Are seen by him who watches from his prison home !

LXXX.

"Romont !" she calls along the hissing spray,
 "Touch ocean and be free !—leap without dread,—
 The Ocean is *not* man and will *not* slay !—
 Heaven and Wrath and Justice are o'erhead,—
 The ocean and my heart beneath thee spread !"

—He sprang,—an instant and her trembling hand
 Drew him upon the steed,—they backward sped,—
 Bleakly the whirlwind smote them from the strand,
 But as they rode—his breath her beating bosom fanned !

LXXXI.

And it was warm although the blast was cold !
 —Before its warmth the waters seemed to part ;—
 And as from out the soul of Rheinègold
 Her tears fell on the wave,—there seemed to start
 A music from it, and some hidden art
 Shed calmness there !—Long Voices filled the bay !
 —As if it fain would take him to its heart,
 The ocean roughly kissed him as he lay,
 And caught at his fair tresses with its hands of spray ;

LXXXII.

And held the lovers to its breast as flowers
 Which it was loath to yield unto the world !
 —When they were sped half distance from the
 towers,
 Full many a wind its drooping banner furled,—
 With lesser rage the howling eddy whirled,
 And Rheingold to the castle turned her gaze.—
 —Great Heaven !—hark the shout !—the echo hurled
 Along the bay !—a hundred torches blaze !—
 Madly she turned and dared no more her glance to
 raise !

LXXXIII.

"Beat through the waves my heart !—we are
 pursued !
 On Nickel !—onward to the strand !" she cried.
 —The Voices in the Sea their Song renewed,
 Around them and beneath them as they hied !

—The wheeling wisps flash upward from the tide,—
The Mermaid rocks the tempest with her strain,
—The ocean's phosphor-lights their courser guide !
—But redder torches flash upon the main,
And with a hue of blood the rushing waters stain !

LXXXIV.

Shout upon shout re-echoes from the coast,
And all are stirring on the castle-height !
—The fatal guardsman from his midnight post
Beheld their forms amid the tempest-light,
Believing first that phantoms mocked his sight ;
But when his eyes had grasped the vision near,
The swift alarm was given,—soon the flight
Was known to Siegerfrid,—to every ear ;—
The bells were rung,—the gaoler—summoned to
appear !

LXXXV.

The vessels filled with troopers they unmoor,
And urge them in pursuit athwart the bay ;
A mounted guard despatched along the shore,
Rides swiftly as a steed can span the way,
Upon the strand the fugitives to stay !—
But ere the troopers gain the further side,
Old Nickel's limbs have struggled from the spray,
No more they battle with the opposing tide,—
But upward—onward strain—unto the forest ride !

LXXXVI.

For Nickel felt the hearts that with him rode,
Belonged unto the forest !—and without
A sign or touch he sprang for their abode !
—Behind them deeper grows the trooper's shout,
As if a foeman's army lay in rout.
—Oh how she yearns for some secreted dale !—
Her spirit slowly sinks in fearful doubt,
For Romont in her arms lies hushed and pale,
And bleeding,—and she feels—his drooping pulses
fail !

LXXXVII.

Oh his fair temple struck upon the stone
As forth he sprang !—and numbed his body lies,
But yet his lips (too full of love to moan,)
Though speechless, kissed her bosom with their sighs !
—Deep in a woodland hollow Nickel hies.—
An instant,—and beneath a mighty oak
Which opened its great heart to their glad eyes,
He lay :—its rugged arms above them broke
Uplifted like a priest's who would his god invoke.

LXXXVIII.

She pressed her hot bewildered brow to his,—
And though no answer from his voice she read,—
She felt his warm eyes tremble 'neath her kiss
Like quivering sunlight in the river's bed !
—But on his mossy pillow still he bled,—
Oh slowly grew his face too sweet for earth !
—His spirit through the forest slowly sped
To Love's own land,—where hate alone has dearth,
The Land in which the Light of his grey eyes had birth !

LXXXIX.

“ Oh leave me not alone in the great wood ! ”—
She wildly cries, and from his lips there come
These lingering words amid the solitude ;—
—“ Farewell Love !—but a little while to roam—
And then my breast—my breast shall be thy home—
And slumber bind thy golden brow with peace !
—Farewell Love—but a little while to roam ”—
—She felt his accents and his breathing cease,—
The forest's murmurs told her—he had found release !

XC.

—“ Oh leave me not alone in the great wood ! ”
Yet from her lips the words convulsive fell,—
And as they fell were caught by stream and flood,
In every voice of echo seemed to dwell,—
And rising with the tempest's mournful swell,
Passed onward until every wind had said ;—
“ Oh leave me not alone in the dark dell ! ”—

—Rustling the leaves of Autumn with its tread,
His spirit slowly—slowly—through the forest sped !

XCI.

And as she harkened, from the distant sea
There seemed to rise a lingering sound of wail,
Which many voices long and mournfully
Sent floating towards her !—like a Winter's Tale
The mystic sound went moaning on the gale,
And brake amid the leafless trees, and wound
Along the pallid sky with cloudy sail !
—Thus ran the burden of that mystic sound
Which from the ocean passing, sped the forest round.—

“ For to sing and mourn and die
Is of Winds the destiny !
And we only are a wind
In a living shape confined !
But it is in memory
Of the loves we felt and knew,
In the days that mystery
Did with shape our life endue,
—That we mourn along the earth !
—That we scatter Autumn-leaves !
—That we give the tempest birth !
—That our path where'er it cleaves
Never resting-place receives !”

XCII.

Oh fair was Romont, in his brow of love
There seemed a mother's presence as he slept !
—The oak inclined his branches from above,
And all the dews to sleep beside him crept,—
And all the Songs of Air around him wept,—
And all the forest's voices seemed to rise
As if unto his battle-shout they leapt !
—Upon his brow yet shone the victor's prize,—
Still greily lulled with shadow—were his loving eyes !

XCIII.

With vacant gaze and vacant thought she rose,
And heard the music on the woodland-side !—
Then murmured as she watched his wild repose ;—
—“ Again I feel the Distant Forests hide

Some ¹ Unknown Love !—so Heaven be my guide !
 Wherever echo builds,—wherever blown
 The winds have wandered,—thither will I ride
 And seek that Love amid the tempest's moan,
 —Romont—I feel I shall *not*—*thither* ride alone !”—

XCIV.

But suddenly the clash of horses' feet
 Upon the ringing stones is heard around !
 Advancing o'er the dell with hollow beat,
 A mounted guard the lonely maid surround ;
 And springing from his charger to the ground,
 The Captain cries ;—“ Behold the sorceress !
 —Advance and seize her,—let the witch be bound !
 —She soon shall feed the flame !—the rack shall
 press
 Her limbs until her tongue its dammed guilt confess !”—

XCV.

The savage throng with fearless eye she meets,
 And points to him who slumbers in the dell !
 And thus the plumed and belted Captain greets ;—
 —“ In vain you seek your captive,—he is well !
 —This night he rides with me o'er flood and fell !
 —Go !—bid your angry lord his search renew !”—
 They forward sprang her taunting speech to quell,—
 When suddenly amid the driven dew
 Arose a Fawn of white—ethereal shape and hue !

There Rheingold leapt upon the Phantom's form,
 There forth she rode amid the rugged storm !
 The Thunders smote above her maiden-head,
 And louder, deeper rolled the Winds their story,—
 But o'er her radiant shoulders as she fled,
 Her wild locks floating, lit the Storm with glory !

¹ Alluding to the unsearched unknown Loves of the Existence to Come, surpassing in *depth* the most profound which we are here capable of feeling.

THE BRIDAL
OF
FORTINBRAY.



TO THE
GIFTED BIOGRAPHER OF KEATS,
THE RIGHT HON. LORD HOUGHTON,
THIS LEGEND
IS, BY PERMISSION, INSCRIBED,
WITH THE HEARTFELT ESTEEM AND RESPECT OF
THE AUTHOR.

•

THE
BRIDAL OF FORTINBRAY.



A LEGEND.

I.

THE Mass was sung, the vows were said ;
And Fortinbray's young knight arose
To lead the bride with whom he wed,
To where the feast, the revel flows.
Before them lay the Northern Sea,
And high upon a rock the castle
Where should pass the revelry.

Sing Winds ! fair blows the Day
For the House of Fortinbray !

II.

Gilda, daughter of the Dane,
Was the bride to whom they chanted ;
On her breast were lilies twain,
Down her robe the sunbeams slanted.
Oh she smiled upon the sea,
On the rock and on the castle,
Where should pass the revelry !

Sing Winds ! a pageant gay
Awaits the House of Fortinbray !

III.

Long ago at Christmastide,
As fair Gilda wandered musing ;—
Elenore her sister hied
Fearful, and with strange accusing,
Bade her fly the Northern Sea,—
—Quench her love,—and let the castle
With that love forgotten be !—
Hush Winds,—what could she lay
Against the House of Fortinbray ?—

IV.

All the waves and pebbles carolled
On the beach, as Gilda cried ;—
—“ Listen how the voice of Harold
Doth through all the corals ride !
He and his blue Northern Sea
Are my portion !—Sister,—waken—
Frenzy strange possesses thee !”—
Blow Winds these shadows grey
From the House of Fortinbray !

V.

But her sister seized her hand,
Answering ;—“ Oh Gilda !—know
In an ancient ballad stand
Things which bid thee to forego
Him and his blue Northern Sea,—
In this old Norwegian castle
Never canst thou Lady be !”—
Roar Winds !—shall gossip-lay
Defame the House of Fortinbray ?

VI.

The sister spake ;—“ Those songs declare
That a trial strange and sore,—
She who weds the twentieth heir,
Will encounter on the shore

Of this blue Norwegian Sea !
 —'Tis forgotten in the castle,—
 But oh Gilda,—fly with me !”—
 List Winds !—that ancient Lay
 O'erhung the House of Fortinbray.

VII.

Sweetly smiling Gilda cried ;—
 “ Sister, thou wert ever given
 Thus to brood on things denied
 By all Reason, Truth and Heaven.
 —Dream more wisely !—let the Sea
 Be thy vision—*it* will never
 Utter a false prophecy !”—
 Sing Winds !—no shadows grey
 Shall touch the House of Fortinbray !

VIII.

Gilda did with Harold rove,
 And the maiden and her lord
 Loved with that sweet Northern Love
 Mighty, mournful and as broad
 As the rolling Northern Sea !
 —Hidden from the raving Southland
 And its sensuality.
 Sing Winds ! such passion lay
 Within the House of Fortinbray !

IX.

Now the bridal-pageant drew
 Toward the castle on the rock ;
 Hundred gilded banners flew
 Waving to the trumpet's shock.
 Tapers shone along the sea ;
 Slaughtered deer and golden goblets
 Filled the castle royally.
 Sing Winds ! red blows the May
 For the House of Fortinbray !

X.

But as they the steps drew nigh
Leading to the banquet-hall,—
Murmurs and a mystic sigh—
Whispered wonder ran through all !
—For before them on the sea,
Lay equipped Lord Harold's galley,—
Braced for battle, martially !
Cease Winds,—what boding day
Greets the House of Fortinbray ?

XI.

Not a man it holds on board,—
Lonely at the quay it stands !—
And with Harold's father's sword
In his lean uplifted hands,—
On the terrace o'er the sea,
Ulf the Seer they now encounter,
Looking on them mysticly !
Comes he Winds, to curse or pray
For the House of Fortinbray ?

XII.

Seldom Ulf the Seer was known
To reveal himself to man,
Seldom were his features shown
For the common eye to scan.
But all things which by the sea
He commanded, Harold's fathers
Heard, obeying silently.
Ancient was his form, and grey
As the House of Fortinbray.

XIII.

Wonder-stricken stood the bride.
—"Wherefore thus equipped my galley ?"
Marvelling, Lord Harold cried ;
"'Tis no hour for martial sally !—

And behold her—on the sea
 Without man on board to guide her !—
 —Waits us some new pageantry ?”
 Speak Winds ! what answered they
 To the Lord of Fortinbray ?

XIV.

Turning thence to Ulf the Seer ;—
 “ Seer,” he spake, “ does Heaven lower
 On the marriage chanted here ?
 Strange thy presence in this hour !
 —Strangely dost thou mark the sea !—
 —In thy hand my father’s falchion,—
 —Speak !—unfold thy mystery !”
 List Winds,—the things that day
 Wrought the House of Fortinbray !

XV.

Stared upon him Ulf the Seer,
 Lifting high his father’s sword.
 —“ Harken Harold !—I am here—
 To reveal thee Heaven’s word.
 —In thy galley o’er the sea,
 Lo !—it is this day appointed,
 Thou depart—alone !” cried he.
 Rouse Wind ! wild blows the day
 For the House of Fortinbray !

XVI.

“ Ended is thy Line,—thou art
 Its latter son !—thy house is o’er !
 —Thou shalt o’er the seas depart,—
 And—wilt never touch a shore !
 —Whither thus thy voyage shall be,
 ’Tis not given me to utter,—
 So,—behold thy mystery.”
 Ho Winds ! prepare the way
 Of the Lord of Fortinbray !

XVII.

Blank,—bewildered was the gaze
Of Lord Harold and the throng.
—To the ocean's distant haze
Turned his eyes,—and wildly long
Was the silence of the sea,
And the mute confounded glories
Of arrested revelry.
 Ho Winds ! the lashing spray
 Greets the ears of Fortinbray !

XVIII.

Swooning in her bridal gear,
Gilda's words her madness fail.
Hushing her, re-spoke the Seer ;—
—“ 'Tis permitted thee to sail
With Lord Harold o'er the sea,—
—Thee alone,—if that thou darest,—
Or ye here shall parted be !”
 Howl winds ! broad looms the bay
 To the eyes of Fortinbray !

XIX.

“ But bethink thee daughter well,—
He no more will greet a strand,—
And no more is mine to tell !
—Lest that this my last command,
Should by man unholden be,
—Know that I who past one hundred
Years have dwelt beside this sea,—
 I, all ancient and as grey
 As the House of Fortinbray ;—

XX.

“ I who with that house have dwelt
As a token it should live,—
My last hour has Heaven dealt !
—So into thy hands I give

This thy father's sword,—for thee
 Lo the mighty ocean spreadeth !—
 —As a latter sign to ye
 I have spoken truth this day
 To the House of Fortinbray ;—

XXI.

“That my word shall be obeyed,—
 Lo ! a token !—mark it well !”—
 —Giving Harold's hand the blade,
 Lifeless—at his feet he fell !—
 —All the castle shook,—the sea
 Moaning, seemed to yearn for Harold !
 —All beheld it voicelessly.
 List Winds ! they kneel and pray
 For the Lord of Fortinbray !

XXII.

Gilda flew to Harold's breast :—
 Came her sire and madly strove
 To enchain her and arrest ;—
 —But with that sweet Northern Love
 Vast and mournful as the sea,—
 She would follow Harold outward,
 —O'er the waters lonelily !
 Sing Winds !—such Love yet lay
 In the House of Fortinbray !

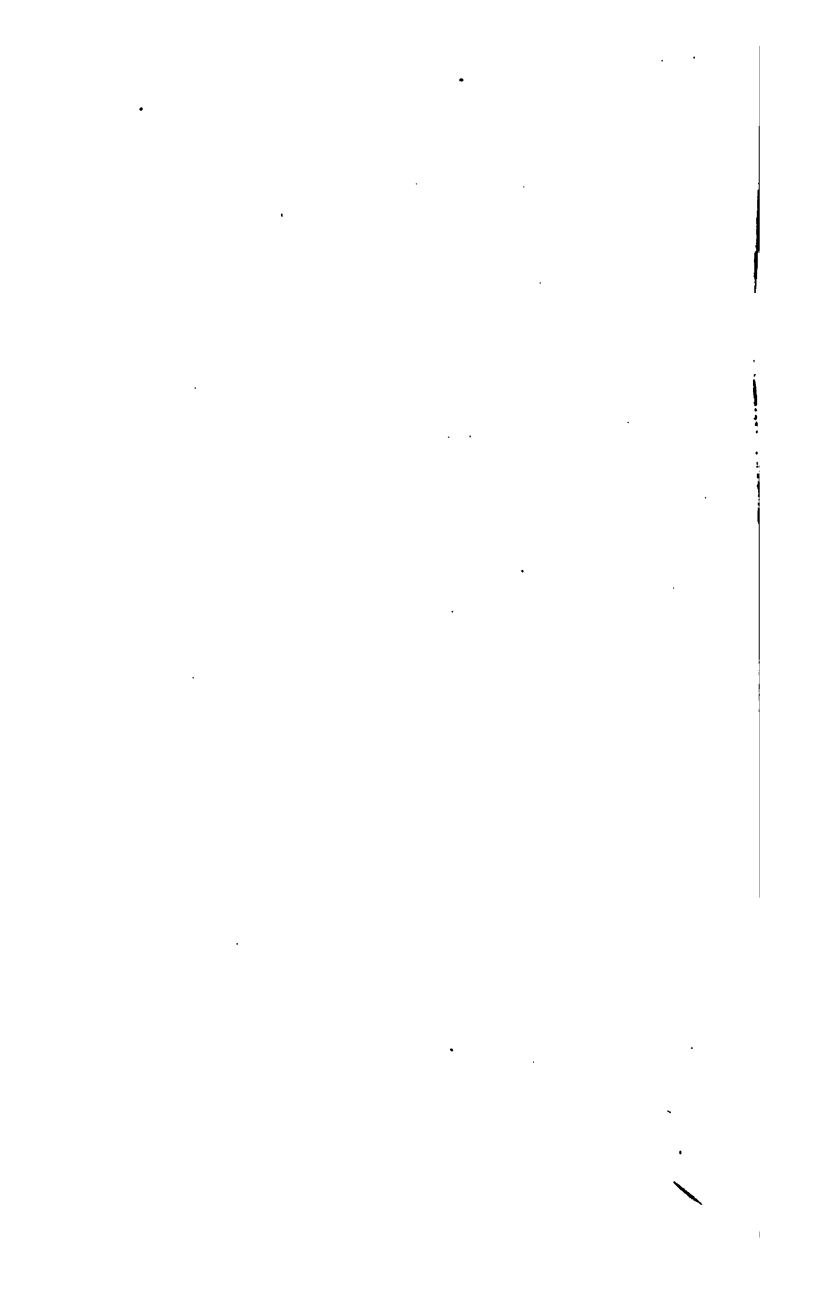
XXIII.

Came a page and breathless, cried ;—
 “Lo the Scutcheon in this hour
 Shattered fell the hearth beside !”—
 —Wildly gazing to his Tower,
 Harold turned him to the sea,—
 Gilda in her bridal-garments,
 Sought the galley silently.
 Blow winds ! and ope the way
 Of the Lord of Fortinbray !

XXIV.

Broadly forth they spread the sail,—
Cut the cable from the shore ;
—Whitely blew her bridal-veil,
As they passed to come no more !
—As they vanished o'er the sea,
Only once a tone he sounded
On his sweet horn mournfully !
Follow Winds !—ye only may
Follow the Lord of Fortinbray !

THE END.





[REDACTED]



